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ISSUE 31



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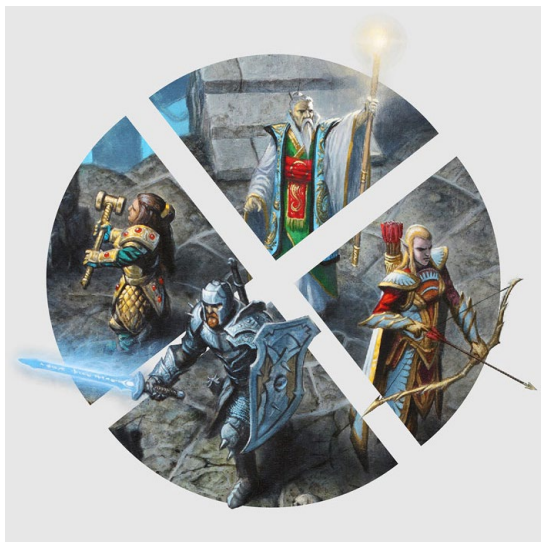


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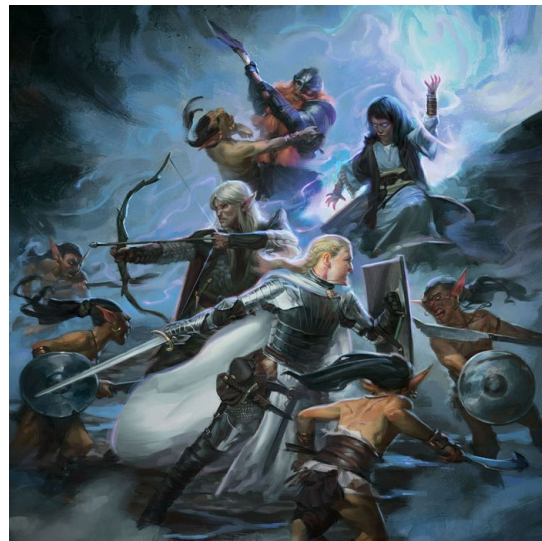
Cool Britannia: Live-play in the UK

The stars of streams, stage, and podcasts tell us why the D&D community in England, Scotland, and Wales puts the "Great" into Great Britain.



Streaming Highlights

Britannia rules the (air)waves this issue as we highlight content from our UK streamers.

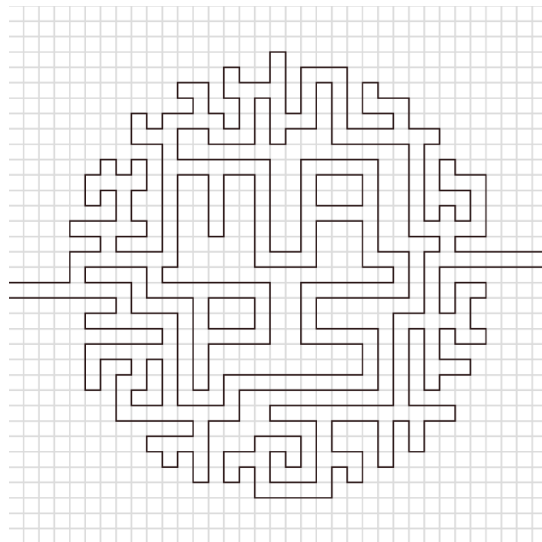


ACCESSIBILITY & D&D

Chloe Mashiter highlights the charities, streamers, and advocates helping to build better awareness around accessibility in the D&D community.



Unearthed Arcana: Spells, Magical Tattoos, and Psionics



Maps of the Month: Eberron: Rising from the Last War, Dungeon of the Mad

Sharing new playtest possibilities for the bard, druid, cleric, fighter, paladin, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, warlock, and wizard.

Mage, Heroes of Battle, Castle Greyhawk

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Creature Feature: Ikorla's Mutating Monsters

Magic: The Gathering adds metamorphosing creatures as we stat up Snapdax, Apex of the Hunt for fifth edition D&D.



Dndspeak d100 list: Gargantuan Monsters

Break out two d10 and inject a colossal threat into your game thanks to our massive list of massive beasts.



D&D Classics: Battlefields

This issue we consider the chaos of pitched battlefields as well as the stalwart defense of fortified castles in military campaigns.



The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Things get supersized this issue as we hunt down the biggest threats the DMs Guild has to offer.



Tactics for Mass Combat

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Next Issue: Dragon+ 32

We'll be chatting with a few of our favorite authors next issue!

for handling hordes.



A big thank you to everyone involved with the creation of this issue. Stay at Home. Play at Home.

DRAGON+ 31

Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 31

Staying at home doesn't mean you can't play at home, says Executive Producer Ray Winninger.

Ray Winninger

Fellow gamers,

My name is Ray Winninger and I'm the new Executive Producer in charge of the Dungeons & Dragons studio at Wizards of the Coast. In just a few months on the job, I've already been impressed by the skills and the passion of the designers, artists, editors, and production staff who bring you our terrific D&D products. They are a uniquely talented group, and it is an honor to work alongside them.



I may be new to my role, but I'm not new to D&D. I played my first game back in 1977, and just a few months later I was standing in line outside my local hobby shop, waiting to purchase the brand-new Advanced Dungeons & Dragons *Player's Handbook*. By the mid-'80s, I was putting myself through college designing D&D material. *Dungeon Module I13* in *Adventure Pack I* was my first product; then came *DL15*, *AC10*, *AC11*, and far too many others to recall.

Since college, I've worked mostly in video games and technology but

I never gave up my connection to D&D. Some of you may know me from the *Dungeoncraft* column I created for *Dragon* magazine in the late '90s, or even for the work I did on *Out of the Abyss* a few years ago.

I accepted the role of Executive Producer not because it gives me a daily opportunity to work with an imaginative team to produce incredible products (although that's *really* nice), but because it gives me a chance to give something back to the game that has given me so much. I know first-hand that Dungeons & Dragons can *change lives*. *D&D* helped me cope with a particularly stressful period in my childhood. More importantly, it helped me find others who shared my quirky interests; many of us who play D&D form our oldest and strongest friendships around the gaming table.

It's also no exaggeration to say that D&D taught me many of the key lessons that made me a success later in life: there's an unconventional solution to almost any problem; listen to what the numbers are telling you before you act; and yes, "never split the party." It was Dungeons & Dragons that helped me truly understand how much more we can accomplish as a team than we'll ever accomplish as individuals. Which brings me to our present, unpleasant circumstances.

As I write this, much of the world is on lockdown to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Here in Seattle, it's been several weeks now since we've been able to pop by our local game stores or gather around a table with friends. During this time, the D&D team has been working hard, from our homes, to keep the new ideas and new products coming. Of course, we're working to safeguard the D&D *business*, taking whatever steps we can to ensure that our partners and ourselves will be bringing you more Dungeons & Dragons for a long time to come.

But right now we're more determined than ever to live up to the responsibility our fans have placed on us. We are acutely aware that we are the present caretakers of this spectacular game and, again, we know how much it means to so many of you. We know that Dungeons & Dragons is responsible, so often, for bringing friends together to exercise their imaginations, support each other, and generally forget their problems for a few precious moments.

For this reason, we've created the "*Stay at Home. Play at Home.*" initiative. As part of this initiative, we're assembling a resource page full of tips and tricks to help make the transition to playing D&D virtually, and we're releasing high-quality, free content every week to give you more to play with. We're still working on a couple of other ideas and we hope to make some additional announcements about the initiative soon. You can learn more about *Stay at Home. Play at Home.* [here](#), and read Wizards of the Coast's response to the COVID crisis [here](#).

And of course, this issue of *Dragon+* contains even more resources to help us all keep connected and playing while "sheltering in place."

I want to wrap this up by thanking our community for predictably stepping up to help others navigate this crisis. Every morning I read reports of D&D fans hosting charity games, working with libraries to host story hours for children, even using their 3D printers to make replacement parts for medical devices! As I said before, D&D fans know that working together as a team is often the only way to overcome adversity.

Never split the party!

R.



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Imagining the Ampersand: Kent Davis

Artist Kent Davis explains how he put the ooh into udaak for this issue's cover.



With twenty pages of creatures packed into its bestiary, the *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* shows exactly how much of a threat the world of Exandria can be. It also arguably saves its best till last, as alphabetically the udaak—pictured so memorably on our cover this issue—appears just after the swavain basilisk.

Known commonly as the brutes of Xhorhas, udaak resemble an immense, demonic cross between ox and gorilla. Their four sets of red eyes and that menacing tangle of teeth and tusks are enough to strike fear into the heart of any creature.

“If I remember correctly the udaak was very briefly mentioned in the *Critical Role* show. It was described as a big, four-armed gorilla-looking creature with lots of teeth. The image I created used that description and included extra details from Senior Art Director Kate Irwin—it was ‘ridiculously big’ with ‘thick fur’,” artist Kent Davis tells *Dragon+*.

The Udaak

Curious to know more about the massive threat on this issue's cover? As described in *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*, udaaks are solitary wanderers, found most commonly along the edges of settled lands in the barrens of Eastern Wynandir. We've included stats for these creatures, available to download below.

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF](#)

“The hardest part was getting the mouth right because Matt Mercer described it as having teeth from shoulder to shoulder and not really having a jaw. My dilemma was how to visualize that and not make it look too goofy, but we ended up with something pretty vicious and terrifying.”

The only thing scarier than the udaak's general appearance is when you get to see those terrifying teeth up close. If it charges at least twenty feet in a straight line and hits a target with a slam attack, it'll more than double the hefty twenty-one damage it normally delivers. Since it will attack almost any prey as it scavenges for food, that's a routine option for the udaak—as the characters on our cover can

verify.

“Those four characters appear throughout the *Explorer’s Guide to Wildemount* and I was sent their basic art. In order to get everybody into that scene I turned the druid into an eagle. I play a moon druid myself and I transform every chance I get, so if you give me the opportunity to draw a druid in animal form I’m going to take it.”

When did you first realise you had a talent for art?

I was recognized as an outstanding artist by teachers in high school and they encouraged me. I was always interested in entertainment media in general, such as movies, games, and now web series, so I knew that I wanted to take my art in that direction. After high school I studied 3D animation and illustration and shortly after I left college, I worked on small indie game projects run by friends.



Nott the Brave (Select to view)

How did you become involved with *Critical Role*?

After working semi-professionally, I began dabbling with illustrations using simple props or prompts where everything comes from your imagination, such as books or the *Critical Role* show. At the time there wasn't a lot of official art out there for the show so there was a huge amount to bring to life. I got to see how creative I can be and surprise people within the community. I got a huge amount of support from both the community and the cast and the

crew of *Critical Role* and also got involved with other projects such as *Geek & Sundry*. That really helped me find my place as a professional artist as people started to reach out to me for illustrations.



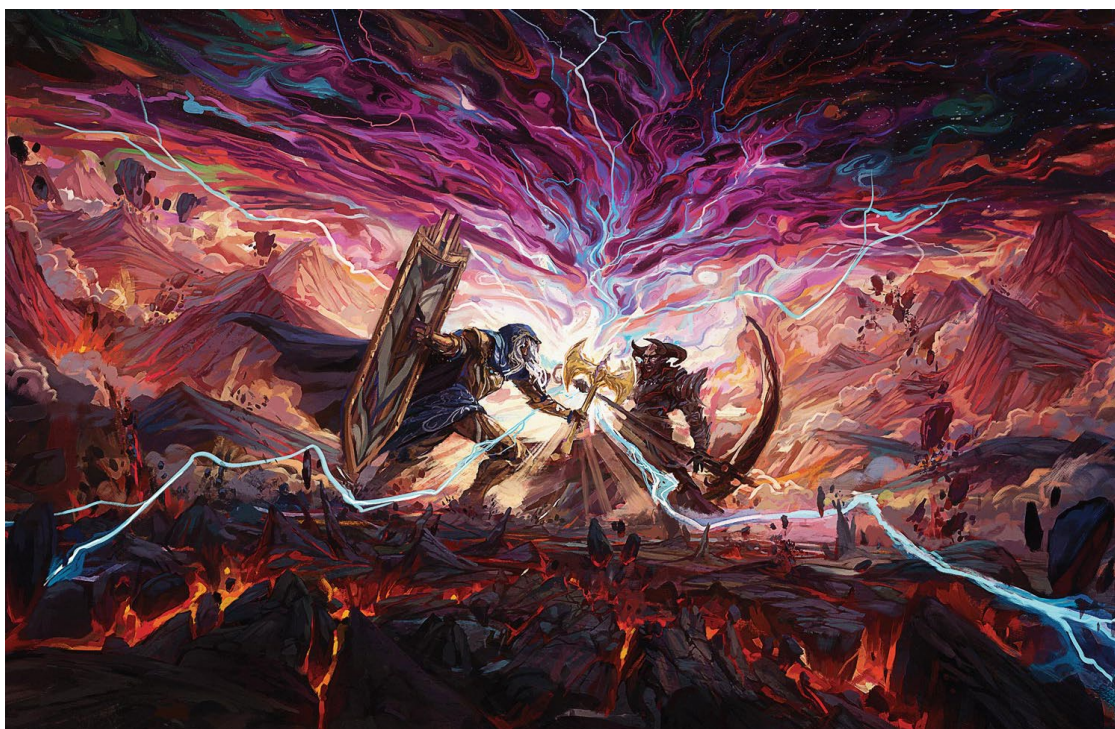
Wildemount Castle (Select to view)

Did art pieces such as Wildemount Castle come solely from Matt Mercer's descriptions in the game?
I had a huge amount of freedom as Wildemount had only featured

briefly in the first campaign. Matt's instructions were that he wanted a castle up on a rocky hillside. The first characters we knew from Wildemount [Sylas and Delilah Briarwood] were a vampire and a necromantic noblewoman, so I drew a gothic-looking cathedral on a rocky, misty mountainside as that's how I imagined it in my head.

What was it like to know your work would appear in an official D&D sourcebook?

I was over the moon! When I got the email from Wizards of the Coast, I thought it can't be true. But a few of my friends from the community were also going to be involved so we'd have our own private Discord chats and talk about how excited we were to get that first art order. It was a real treat.



(Select to view)

Is it true you created the character art for Brian W. Foster's first ever D&D character and that led to you working on the art for *UnDeadwood*?

I created portrait art for Brian for his home campaign. Was it his first character? It was really fun to work on. He was getting ready to start a game with a bunch of friends and he sent me a long character description, including information no one else in the game was privy to. Later he said he was getting ready to do a one-off show and asked if I would be interested in doing character art again. I had two weeks to complete all five illustrations.

Those characters were used in a very special set of *UnDeadwood* playing cards, with the portrait art on the face cards. Was that befitting of the Western setting?

And the game mechanics too. Watching them pulling out the cards on the show and seeing my art on them was a surreal feeling. I got sent a couple of courtesy packs that I treasure.

How would you describe your art style?

My go-to is cloudy mountains, too many cloudy mountains. I should branch out, but I do what I love. My images also contain lots of detail as I try to include some majesty. Sometimes I zoom in and six hours go by and I think, "I should probably go to bed now. Why am I still rendering a rock on the side of a mountain face? No one's even going to look at this."



Departure (Select to view)

These days people may well zoom into that detail and be impressed at the effort that went into the background...

I do get some good responses on social media about how detailed my art looks. A lot of artists take photos of real-life places and add them into their images to make that detailing process easier. I sometimes do that to save time but it's not as much fun. If there are supposed to be flowers, I'd rather paint each individual one. It's not the best plan in terms of time-to-money ratio but it is pretty zen when you get into it.

Do you sketch traditionally or is your creative process entirely digital?

I used to take a drawing pad with me everywhere, but I've transferred almost entirely to digital. Now if I want to draw on the go it's an iPad, using Procreate and Apple Pencil. I'm constantly sketching. One of my recent discoveries is YouTube walking tours, which is one of my favorite things to do during the lockdown. People have visited exotic places and recorded themselves walking down the street or up a mountain trail and it's almost as if I was there. I can pause the tour in a cool spot and draw that scene.



Vanquish (Select to view)

What's your D&D experience like? Based on the discussion of your moon druid you don't simply watch livestreams...

When I work I'm often starved for entertainment, so I'm always looking for music, audio books, and podcasts to listen to. A voice

actor named Laura Bailey mentioned she was part of a D&D show with a bunch of other voice actors. I like Laura and I recognized a few of the other names so I decided to check it out. After one episode of *Critical Role* I was hooked. I didn't really understand until then that D&D could be this improv experience with friends as part of a shared story. I first played shortly after that and I have two campaigns going on right now. We've been playing one of them for almost three years. I've done plenty of one-shots, too.

What characters do you play?

In the newest campaign I play the moon druid, who is loosely inspired by Keyleth from the first *Critical Role* campaign. I wanted to play a druid after seeing how badass that character was. In the older campaign I have a 17th-level human bard. He's my boy. We're all bards at this point as every character has multi-classed to be a bard to a certain degree. We're constantly singing at each other and everybody's throwing inspiration around. It's pretty chaotic, but I love it.

Has the party of bards formed a band?

We are a band now. When it started only two of us were bards, but the way the story progressed everyone started playing instruments. Now everyone's in the band except for one character who is a pure fighter. We're trying to get that last guy to multi-class to join the band and we'll get him one day. That's going to be fun, a bunch of 20th-level bards running around.

You can see more of Kent Davis's work on [his official website](#) and at the [Critical Role wiki](#), and connect with him on [Twitter](#). *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* released on March 17, 2020 with an MSRP of \$49.95 and is available to [order now](#). You can also get a first taste of *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* with a free adventure preview featuring everything needed to run the Frozen Sick starting adventure. Find out more at [D&D Beyond](#) and [Roll20.net](#).

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UDAAK

Known commonly as the brutes of Xhorhas, these enormous creatures resemble an immense, demonic cross between ox and gorilla. Udaaks are solitary wanderers, found most commonly along the edges of settled lands in the barrens of Eastern Wynandir. Though they often scavenge for food, a hungry udaak will attack almost any prey, its four sets of red eyes and its tangle of teeth and tusks striking fear into the heart of any creature.

Living Siege Engine. Originally brought to Exandria from the Abyss, udaaks lost their connection to that realm after the Divergence and have roamed the world freely ever since. In recent years, the warmasters of the Kryn Dynasty have developed arcane collars that can keep an udaak under control, and they have begun using these dread creatures in the war against the Dwendalian Empire.



UDAAK

Gargantuan fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 165 (10d20 + 60)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)	3 (–4)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Str +13, Con +11

Damage Vulnerabilities thunder

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities frightened, grappled, poisoned, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Charge. If the udaak moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a slam attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 27 (6d8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 21 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 20 feet away from the udaak and knocked prone.

Siege Monster. The udaak deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The udaak makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its slam.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (2d12 + 8) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 21). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the udaak can't bite another target.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Swallow. The udaak makes one bite attack against a Large or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. A swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the udaak, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the udaak's turns.

If the udaak takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the udaak must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the udaak. If the udaak dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 20 feet of movement, exiting prone.

D&D Live 2020: Roll w/ Advantage

The yearly Dungeons & Dragons event returns in June to preview a major new storyline.



Players, fans, and everyone looking to get their first taste of the world's greatest roleplaying game's latest storyline can watch it come to life at *D&D Live 2020: Roll w/ Advantage*.

The D&D community—and some very special guests—will gather online to celebrate the game through an immersive entertainment experience. The three-day extravaganza includes sneak peeks at

upcoming products, liveplay games with D&D luminaries, star guests from the world of entertainment, unique giveaways, and a daily after show!

Wizards of the Coast is packing its tables with personality to help raise money for charity, with all proceeds from *D&D Live 2020: Roll w/ Advantage* benefiting **Red Nose Day**. Actors David Harbour (*Hellboy*, *Stranger Things*) and Brandon Routh (*Arrow*, *Superman Returns*) will be joined by funny people Kevin Sussman, Brian Posehn, and Thomas Middleditch, as well as *WWE* Superstars Xavier Woods, Tyler Breeze, Ember Moon, Alexa Bliss and Dio Maddin, and Deborah Ann Woll leads a group of players she's assembled through an awesome adventure.



RED NOSE DAY

Red Nose Day supports programs that address both the immediate needs of children in poverty while fostering long-term change. Funds raised are split 50/50 between the United States and some of the poorest communities around the world. Red Nose Day ensures your donations go where the need is the greatest. Food. Medicine. Shelter. And most importantly, to give hope.

To date, Red Nose Day donations have positively impacted over 25 million children living in poverty to help change their stories for good. We hope you can help join us in supporting the cause!

Red Nose Day in the United States is a program of Comic Relief US, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

“It’s going to be the biggest, most star-studded D&D liveplay presentation ever. We’ve expanded the roster of folks who have played D&D in the past to include mainstream performers from around the world of entertainment to take that to new heights,” says Greg Tito, Senior Communications Manager at Wizards of the Coast.

“We’re raising money for Red Nose Day, a campaign of Comic Relief US, as part of this event. They’re collecting money in support of children who have been affected by the COVID-19 virus and the pandemic. We want to draw as many eyes as we can to this event to help us get as many donations as possible.”

The opening day also includes a conversation between host Anna Prosser, Chris Perkins and other guests to discuss the 2020 storyline in full, while showcasing a host of other upcoming D&D products.

GET INVOLVED

Apparel commemorating the partnership between D&D and Red Nose Day are **available for purchase now**. The custom-designed, family friendly adventure **Return to the Glory** is also available to buy, with all Hasbro/Wizards of the Coast proceeds going towards Red Nose Day. Attendees can also gain access to event-only features such as virtual D&D play previewing the new storyline for a small donation of \$10 or more.

“Players who register for the event will also gain access to advance registration for future D&D sessions, using a scheduling platform we’re rolling out for this event,” Tito explains. “They’ll use the new D&D Live event portal to sign up for four unique, hour-long sessions (when available).”

Fans also have the chance to shape the event itself by participating in

an expansive online puzzle created using Reality RP, running across [Instagram](#) and the main D&D channels. This mashup of fantasy storytelling, community engagement, and reality television will see ten well-known members of the D&D community playing characters in a series of challenges, to find which of them is the best equipped to be the savior of Faerûn.

“There’s a story as to why they’re pitted against each other in these reality TV-style challenges and fans can vote on who should be kept at the end of each session. That continues until one character reigns supreme,” Tito tells *Dragon+*.

“It’s a popularity contest, but you’re also trying to work out who is the true champion. The whole event will be about deductive reasoning as players discover and solve this puzzle.”

The adventure begins 10am PT (1pm ET) on June 18, 2020 and will run through June 20, 2020 at dnd.wizards.com/dndlive.

COMIC RELIEF PLAYS DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

You can still watch the hilarious D&D one-shot featuring Dungeon Master Paul Foxcroft and comedians Sue Perkins, Ed Gamble, Sara Pascoe, and Nish Kumar, playing to raise COVID-19 relief funds in the UK and around the world... and [donate!](#)

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IN THE WORKS



PREVIEWS

IN THE WORKS



Mythic Odysseys of Theros

Join our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

In the previous issue of *Dragon+*, James Wyatt provided our first exclusive look at **the fifth edition world of Theros** including details on new races, subclasses, and gifts from the gods. As this plane from *Magic: The Gathering* continues to take shape for Dungeons & Dragons, two other members of the team bringing the *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* sourcebook to life stopped by to offer us further exclusive details. With so many massive monsters on show this issue, we couldn't help but ask Wes Schneider (Wyatt's co-lead on the project) and Jeremy Crawford (who is overseeing the final design of the book's mechanics) about the creatures which will be leaving their gigantic footprints all across Theros' kingdoms.



MYTHIC MONSTERS

Ever since *Clash of the Titans*, the kraken now regularly features in campaign settings leaning into Greek mythology—Theros being no exception. Yet in the original Greek tales Perseus faced a very different sea monster: Cetus. Cetus was often described more as a sea serpent or ship-swallowing whale, and the creature’s name is where the word “cetacean” (meaning whale or huge fish) comes from.

Unleash More Krakens!

Would an Irish kraken be a craic-ken? Just here for a good time and to spread the news—kind of like *Dragon+*! In fact, we seem to have a bit of fondness for these tentacled horrors. Back in *Dragon+* #26 we ran Mark Price and David Roomes’ short story featuring krakens: *The Henchman*. You can also check out at the amazing [kraken diorama](#) we explored in *Dragon+* #28, courtesy of WizKids and artist Dariusz Piotrowski! Plus, elsewhere this issue, Larian shows off concept art for *Divinity: Original Sin 2*’s kraken!

Clash of the Titans (and no offense to the 2010 film but we’re partial to 1981’s [Ray Harryhausen version](#) ourselves!) may be the ultimate

expression of how a party of adventurers in D&D might have to deal with such a gigantic sea monster. It has the need to find courageous allies, mystical advice, and magical tools to defeat such a destructive creature. However, there are krakens and then there are *krakens*, as noted in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros*:

“Krakens number among the most terrifying denizens of the sea, their wrath capable of ruining entire poleis (or cities, as they’re known in Theros). Under normal circumstances, each kraken is bound by a sea lock, a magical effect that restricts its travel. The area encompassed by the lock is large enough to enable the kraken to feed but prevents these near-immortal beings from raiding densely populated regions. Some stories claim that a seaquake or other natural disaster might break a sea lock and free the kraken to rage as it pleases. Other tales, though, suggest that sea locks emanate from ancient coral weapons buried in the ocean depths that keep a kraken tied within a few hundred miles.



“The largest and most devastating krakens, nadir krakens, dwell in the deepest ocean trenches. These krakens are unique beings, of which the terrifying **Tromokratis** numbers among the most feared. When a nadir kraken breaks free of its sea lock and rises to the surface, continents are redrawn, civilizations collapse, and eras end.”

“My favorite part of this project was taking some of the titanic creatures in Theros and giving them the mythic monster treatment. Their mythic actions essentially see them function as two amazingly powerful creatures and these two phases will represent a level of difficulty that many D&D parties have not faced before in fifth edition. I’m very much looking forward to people getting to the end of the first phase of one of these creatures and thinking they’ve won,

only to have the creature transform and now they have to deal with phase two which is often more difficult than the first phase!” Crawford reveals.

“I’m especially hoping many DMs don’t share with their players in advance that the phases exist because it will be quite wonderful to have a party surprised when the titan they supposedly just slew lumbers back to its feet and transforms into an entirely new combat encounter.”

“As D&D designers we often talk about taking a run at the kind of big boss fights that you see in video games, where you defeat them and then they’re like, ‘Ha, behold my true form!’ This captures that really nicely and even includes a little bit of text to read aloud for each monster, to deliver what is hopefully a cinematic ‘Hold on, what just happened?’ moment before the second fight begins,” adds Schneider.

MAGIC TRICK

Writing a D&D fifth edition sourcebook that captures the rich world of Theros involves more than simply turning creatures into stat blocks. There was already a huge amount of lore surrounding the *Magic: The Gathering* setting but as the designers found with the *Guildmasters’ Guide to Ravnica*, a Dungeons & Dragons setting has additional needs.

“There were already two significant, gorgeous Theros world guides when I got brought onto the project. Those were... I was about to say dropped onto my lap but I would’ve been working with broken femurs if that had happened! They’re these massive guides, riddled with incredible art,” remembers Schneider.

“As thorough as those documents were, there are certain details that weren’t included as part of that world building. *Magic: The Gathering* deals with the epic sweep of a setting. It asks, ‘How do the planeswalkers interact with the world?’ ‘What giant monsters can be summoned?’ and ‘Which characters are going to show up on the cards?’” Crawford explains.

“Whereas in a roleplaying game, you play one of those people featured on the card. To explore what it’s like to be a person in Theros, we have to give you the game options to play those people.

We need to flesh out the world to create the rules which support that storytelling.”

One element the pair helped flesh out is the new races in Theros, which Schneider introduced us to [in the previous issue of *Dragon+*](#). The leonin race are humanoid cats whose appearance is closer to lions than the traditional cat form of a tabaxi, while satyrs are a happy-go-lucky race with a love of partying.

“You could take satyrs in a different direction and make them a little more grim-dark,” says Schneider, “but we were influenced by so much great *Magic: The Gathering* art of them having a grand old time that we wanted to make them a really earnestly happy, fun-loving race. There’s a lot of charm there.”

“At one point we actually considered using the tabaxi race as the basis for the leonin and noting that they look different,” adds Crawford, “but as we familiarized ourselves with the leonin narrative in *Magic*, we realized tabaxi wasn’t the best fit. The leonin in *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* are mighty warriors and are much burlier than tabaxi. They also have a mighty roar that they can let out because it would have been a big miss on our part to have lion people and not include some kind of dramatic roar. Leonin are also one of the only races in Theros that know the gods are right there listening, watching and interacting with this world but react by saying, ‘We’re not interested. Leave us alone.’”

SUPER SUBS

Alongside new races, *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* also introduces a couple of new subclasses that will be familiar to readers of [Unearthed Arcana](#). Following feedback from playtests carried out by the D&D community, both of these subclasses have been improved.

“Both the College of Eloquence for the bard and the Oath of Glory for the paladin appeared in *Unearthed Arcana* some months ago, so when people see these subclasses in the Theros sourcebook they will be familiar. But both have been enhanced in a variety of ways and I think people are really going to like the direction that we pushed them in,” says Crawford.

“Back then the Oath of Glory was called the Oath of Heroism. It’s an option for the paladin where their entire being is about acquiring

glory—not only for themselves but also for their companions. The College of Eloquence for the bard does a really good job of communicating the flavor of the orators that were such a big part of Greek mythology. They’re both very solid subclasses.”

Whether you choose to battle the mightiest of mythic monsters or start smaller with amphisbaena (a two-headed snake with a face at either end of its body that grips its own neck to roll across the ground like a hoop!), play as a satyr bard or a leonin paladin, the roleplaying version of *Magic: The Gathering*’s Theros plane has much to surprise and delight.

“The fundamental difference between the two games is that at its heart *Magic* is a competitive game, whereas D&D is a co-operative game,” Crawford says. “In *Magic* the players are often trying to destroy each other, whereas the question we constantly have to answer in D&D is why do very different people often with opposing goals work together? What is the gravitational pull that brings those characters together? It’s a fascinating difference in terms of world building.”



Mythic Odysseys of Theros is available to **preorder now** with an MSRP of \$49.95. The first 20 players pre-ordering a physical copy from a participating friendly local gaming store’s website will also receive a 50% discount on the digital version at D&D Beyond.

Previous *Magic: The Gathering* fifth edition D&D sourcebook
Guildmasters' Guide to Ravnica is currently on sale.

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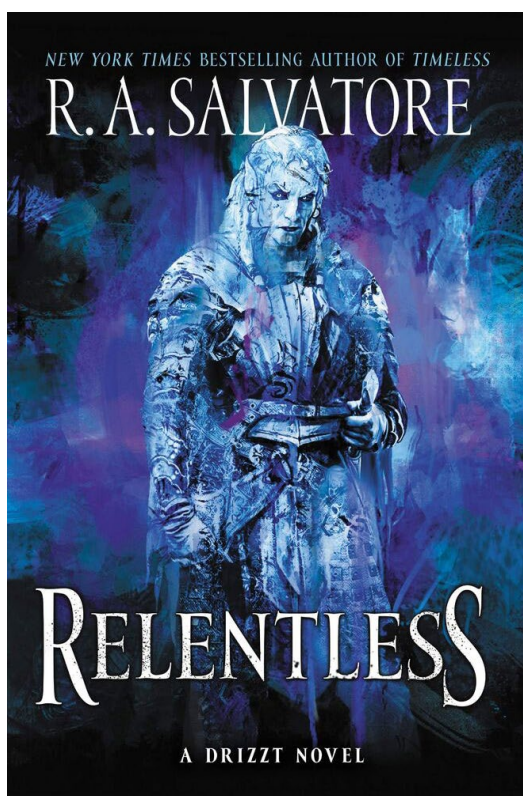
IN THE WORKS



R.A. Salvatore's Relentless

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

The stakes have never been higher for R.A. Salvatore's most beloved creations as his latest bestselling trilogy draws to its epic conclusion. The final volume of a saga that began with *Timeless* and *Boundless* hasn't only focused on Drizzt Do'Urden, it's also seen the unexpected return of his father, Zaknafein.



“Zaknafein has had 200 years cut out of his life because he was dead,” Salvatore tells *Dragon+*. “And now he’s been brought back and nobody quite knows why. That reason is finally revealed in *Relentless*.”

Displaced in time and unexpectedly reunited with his son, Zaknafein has overcome the prejudices ingrained in him as a drow warrior. Yet his world view can't quite match that of Drizzt's, given their very different experiences of the Realms.

“For his day Zaknafein was very openminded as a drow. He was tolerant and forward thinking and didn't want to kill other races. He would escort the halflings that

were captured back to the surface and let them live. But his day was hundreds of years ago,” the *New York Times* bestselling author says.

“If you go back and watch 1970s television or movies you will find a lot of things that under current 2020 sensibilities seem appalling to us now. That’s the way I approached Zaknafein. He’s not going to return and be the same as his son, who has spent centuries among this society. He has the anachronisms that come from a different time.

“Zak has come into a world that’s very much evolved from the drow society he came from. He’s trying hard to come to terms with it but every now and then he’ll say something that doesn’t fit the sensibilities of this new world. In Drizzt’s day, that doesn’t fly.

“Drizzt himself came through that. And Drizzt’s friends are smart enough to see there’s hope that Zaknafein can throw off the entrapments of his upbringing. He has to evolve as a character and a person and come through that in an abbreviated manner. That’s what makes him so much fun to write.”

LEGENDARY WARRIOR

Though Zaknafein has already endured tough battles against the ambitious Spider Queen, survival has come at a terrible cost and the fight is far from over. Facing demons and driders, he carries the weight of Menzoberranzan on his shoulders once more. But the chances of survival for himself and his old friend Jarlaxle look bleak. Trapped in a desperate and seemingly hopeless situation, the legendary warriors must reach deep inside themselves to face the impossible. As one of Menzoberranzan’s greatest warriors, Zaknafein is uniquely suited to handle these challenges.

HUMBLE BOOK BUNDLE: DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Many of R.A. Salvatore’s novels have been included in a bundle of D&D ebooks, featuring 23 backlisted titles from the Legend of Drizzt and Underdark fiction series. Consumers can decide how much they want to pay for the bundle (with certain limits), with a portion of the funds benefiting Extra Life and raising money for Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals. The collection includes: *Homeland*; *Exile*; *Sojourn*; *The Crystal Shard*; *Streams of Silver*;

The Halfling's Gem; The Legacy; Starless Night; Siege of Darkness; Passage to Dawn; The Silent Blade; The Spine of the World; Sea of Swords; Dissolution; Insurrection; Condemnation; Extinction; Annihilation; Resurrection; The Collected Stories: The Legend of Drizzt Anthology; and Lisa Smedman's Lady Penitent trilogy. It's available [here](#).

[LEARN MORE](#)

“As we’ve seen in the books, his mantra is train, train, train. If there’s something he can anticipate and create a counter move for, he’ll practice so many times that it happens without any thought. If Zaknafein was a boxer and he was stepping into the ring with a lefty, he would spend all of his time trying to figure out how to counter a jab from his opponent’s right hand. That’s the way he approaches his craft,” Salvatore explains.

“He trains constantly and is as dedicated to it as a Shaolin priest would be. It’s not just that he wants to be the best, it’s that his training regimen is his escape from drow society. When he’s in the training room he doesn’t have to think about anything other than that.”

Relentless is released in hardback by Harper Collins on 28 July 2020 with an MSRP of \$28.99 and is available [to pre-order now](#).

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IN THE WORKS



Warriors of Waterdeep

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...



The latest features to be added to the smash hit D&D mobile game are currently rolling out, though the update’s nickname (“Rallies and Reels”) cleverly hides the details of this major new addition. Not only does your guild now have a group event it can take part in (called a “Rally”) but a familiar face with a fishing rod is also joining the action—and he’s bringing a new class with him.

FREE GEMS!

Our friends at Ludia are gifting 50 gems to every reader who clicks on [this link](#). You must have completed your first challenge in *Warriors of Waterdeep* and you must click the link on the mobile device where the game is installed, as it will open the game to deliver the reward.

“We had a lot of demand from players to include a monk in *Warriors of Waterdeep* as we continue to add D&D classes. Joppa, the human monk from the original *Force Grey* campaign, is an unusual character because he’s a fisherman who has applied all of his monk training to landing the perfect catch,” Stephen David Wark tells *Dragon+*, describing Joppa as a chilled version of Captain Ahab, since there is only one very large undersea creature that can make him lose all reason to chase after.

“His primary weapon is his fishing pole and the four different versions of that in our game are named after his favorite catches with that particular pole. His common weapon is called *Quipper’s Bite* because he used to fish for tiny piranha, while the legendary weapon is called *Kraken’s Nemesis* because it’s the one fish he’s never managed to land!”

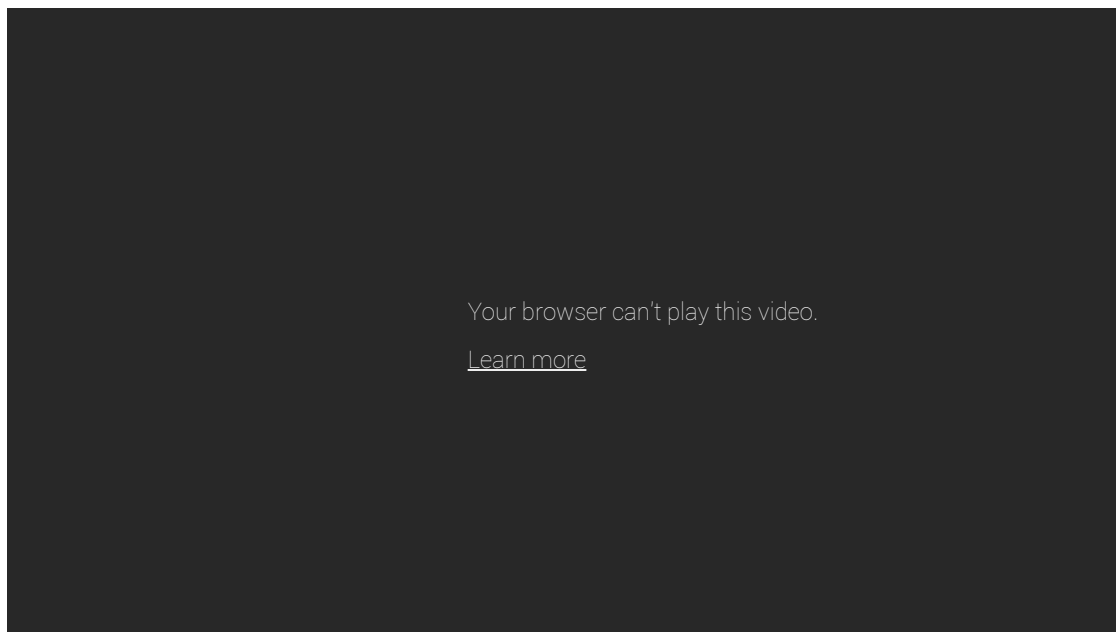


Joppa's secondary weapons are harpoons that are also named after creatures he has hunted—such as a great shark and moray eels—with in-game effects related to those specific creatures. Yet it's his impressive abilities that will make him an essential part of any team.

“Mechanically the character plays with a lot of extra movement and attacks. He's got a great attitude and is super-chilled right until the moment of conflict, when he springs into action. We're playing off the Quivering Palm and Flurry of Blows attacks to have him go from being really calm to this burst of activity and then back to being really calm again,” Wark explains.

“He also gains immunities to debuff effects and as he becomes more experienced and his gear gets upgraded he becomes almost impossible to stop because he can't be disarmed, dominated, or have his movement taken away. He can override any of those obstacles

because he's in control of all his ki powers and is the master of himself."



One brand-new effect that will be introduced with Joppa's ki powers is his ability to control his own fate. He can focus his ki to guarantee that the next random effect he generates, either at the start of the turn or as a result of being hit, automatically succeeds. "He'll look like he's not acting in a turn while that is happening, but the likelihood is he's actually setting up a combo that might be a devastating final attack," Wark reveals.

Joppa will be added to *Warriors of Waterdeep* in the same way that Nayeli and **Jarlaxle** were. Once available, there will be a pre-sale period followed by an event where the character can be recruited by completing the event. If players don't succeed in adding Joppa to their party during that event, he'll eventually be unlocked as an option when they secure enough in-game renown to sign on a new member of the team.



RALLYING CALL

Those who have set up a guild (or signed up to be a member of one) also have plenty of new options thanks to this update. Guild events are a new way for players to earn rewards along with the other members of their guild as they compete for bragging rights. The three types of guild events are:

Rally: Defeat an endless stream of monsters and earn individual rewards.

Raid: Attack an endless stream of bosses and unlock rewards for everyone in the guild.

Battle: Carry your guild's banner into a Test of Might and unlock rewards for everyone in the guild.

“Once we introduced guilds, players started asking for events you could take part in alongside your teammates. We’ve developed three types of guild events that form their own parallel campaign in *Warriors of Waterdeep*. If they’re part of a guild, players will start to find a new type of currency in the game in both the free-to-unlock chests and the PvP chests. Once a week they can spend these tokens to enter a guild event where they will compete among themselves and

see their rankings within the guild,” Wark says.

“The end-of-month guild event might be a Raid, where players try to defeat one of the bosses as many times as possible. For example, you might try and defeat the Anvil of Dumathoin as many times as possible consecutively with no healing in between rooms—just boss fight after boss fight after boss fight. It’s a collective endeavor, and every victory earns points and prizes shared among the entire guild.

“The other option is a guild Battle, which is a PvP event between guilds with similar stakes. It’s very similar to our Test of Might or Silverhand Trials.”

DESIGNED BY SILVERHAND



The addition in this update of hard-to-acquire gear designed by **Laeral Silverhand** herself has also now been expanded to include all heroes. These rewards can be accessed by completing multi-stage events and earning a certain number of PvP victories. When players complete every element of the challenge, they unlock the Silverhand Gear.

“Silverhand weapons are roughly equivalent in power to legendary weapons in the game. It was fun designing weapons in the style of the Silverhand armor as featured in *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*.

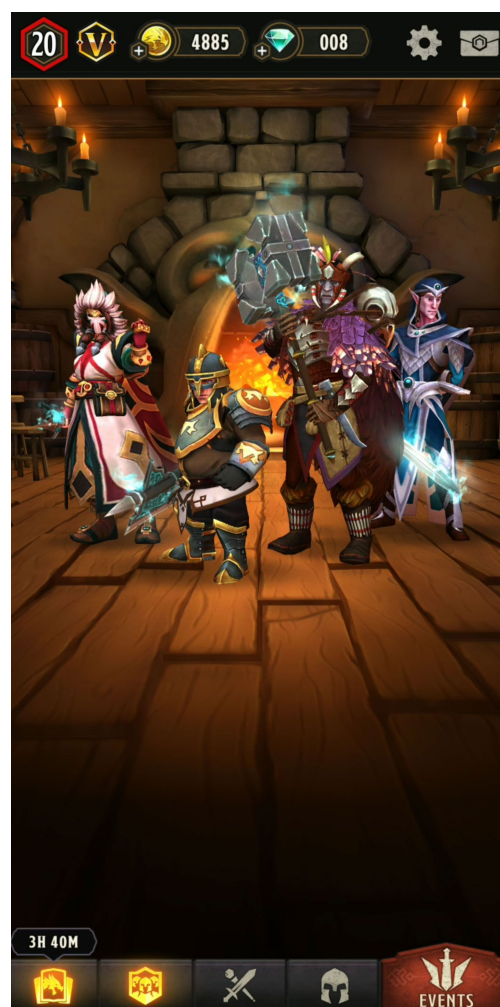
They’re gorgeous with lots of teal, silver, and flame effects. It’s cool to see a battle axe or a harpoon in that style,” Wark says.

“But the only way to get them is to win one of the special events. You have to prove yourself worthy of the item before it will start popping up in chests, card packs, and for sale in the store. We plan

to hold at least one event per month with a chance to unlock Silverhand Gear.”

Another new set of items that have been made available in game are Spellbooks. There are four types of Spellbooks and each one has a different effect for a limited time:

- A Grimoire of Gold increases coin rewards.
- An Atlas of Adventure increases XP rewards.
- A Book of Bravery reduces how much it costs to take part in events.
- A Treatise of Time reduces how long it takes to open Battle chests.



“This is a new type of item that we’ve made available in the game, either for sale in the shop or as items in the daily gift calendar. They’re time-limited reward boosters that last for one, two, three, twelve, or maybe even seventy-two hours. When you earn a Spellbook it’s activated immediately, and if you pick up the same one twice it extends the active time of the existing Spellbook,” Wark says.

“People love gold and they love opening chests faster, so those generated the most excitement in playtesting. It’s an instant change, so as soon as you open the chest you benefit from the effect right away.”

Warriors Of Waterdeep is available now for **Android** and **iOS** devices as a free download with in-game purchases. Human monk Joppa is available now in the presale or can be added to your party by

participating in the recruitment event in May.



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IN THE WORKS



Heroes & Villains D&D Clothing Range

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

A hulking, human warrior stands alone, fiendish, red eyes blazing from within a demon-winged helm. Strangely armored on one half of his body, he carries his sword Nightwind alongside his fiend-embossed shield, ready to strike. His name is **Warduke** and he is one of Dungeons & Dragons' most iconic villains.

“A true fighter makes himself rich and powerful by the strength of his sword arm,” Warduke feels. “He takes what he can—if you would keep your possessions, kill those who seek to take them.”



Warduke made his debut as a 1980's action figure, before appearing in Carl Smith's 1983 module *AC 1: The Shady Dragon Inn* and Michael L. Gray's 1984 module *XL-1: Quest for the Heartstone*. Yet his most deadly incarnation was in *Dungeon* magazine #105's *Critical Threats* column (December 2003) as an 18th level human fighter, where he was kitted out with—among other deadly items—a +3 *anarchic flaming burst human bane bastard sword* and +5 *bashing heavy steel shield*, while wearing +3 *moderate fortification adamantine ceremonial spiked half-plate*, and *Warduke's helm*, as well as sporting a *fearsome eye* fiendish graft to give him those piercing red eyes.

He's now been immortalized in an exclusive new clothing collection from Heroes & Villains. The range includes a black, short-sleeved tee (\$30) and long-sleeved tee (\$35), a classic Warduke drawing tee (\$30), and an "Evil Fighter" snapback cap (\$28). Those items join an

existing selection of D&D products that includes a Volo-themed hat and tees, among others.

Check out the full range of Dungeons & Dragons products at the [Heroes & Villains website](#).



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IN THE WORKS



Baldur's Gate III

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

We couldn't have an issue stacked with massive monsters and behemothian beasts and not give a shout out to the amazing cinematic opening of *Baldur's Gate III*. The action-packed movie sees citizens of the Sword Coast under threat from a deadly aerial assault, as an illithid attempts to snatch them from their own streets to experiment upon them.

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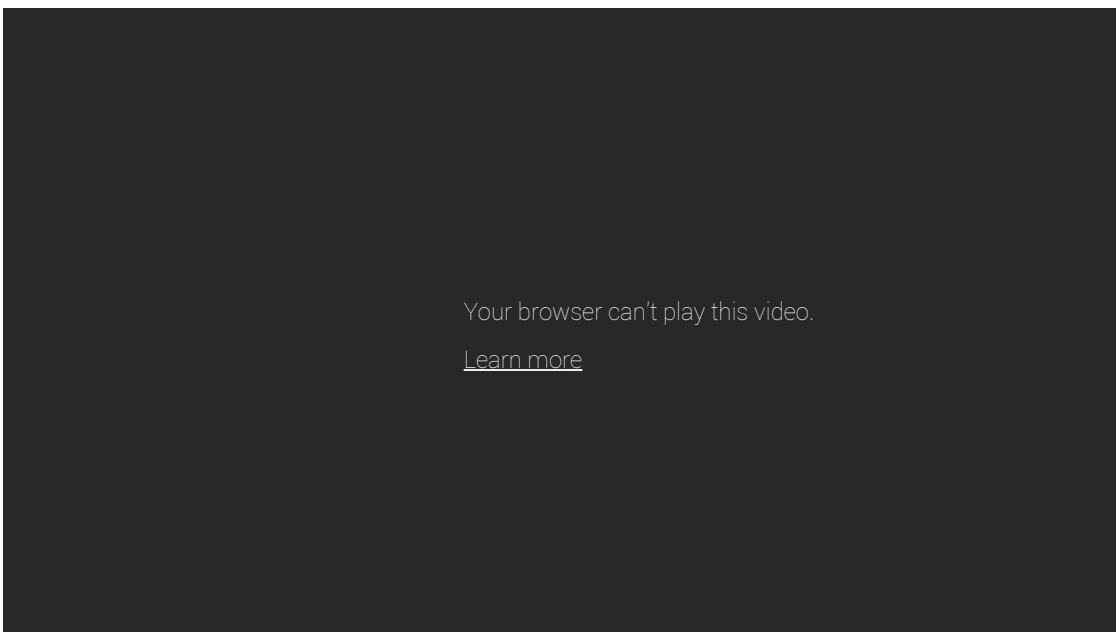
[Learn more](#)

The attack vehicle of choice is a nautiloid, an enormous living bio-ship that responds to the commands of its mind flayer pilot. Birthing pods are opened with the release of a clenched hand and colossal tentacles crush the buildings they have wrapped around with the closing of that same fist.

The Larian team has very kindly shared a few images that show the development of this impressive craft.



Larian is also responsible for the *Divinity: Original Sin* series of roleplaying video games and given our theme this issue the company had one more monstrosity to share. Anyone who has made it to Arx Harbor in the sequel (which Kate Welch is currently playing in her video series *Welch's Gem Juice*, check out the first Twitch video [here!](#)) knows that there's a sizeable threat waiting at the docks.



The image below shows the concept art for the kraken from *Divinity:*

Original Sin 2, including those toothy abyssal tentacles.



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Baldur's Gate III will be available on **Steam Early Access** later in 2020. Gather your party and subscribe for *Baldur's Gate III* updates at the **official website**.

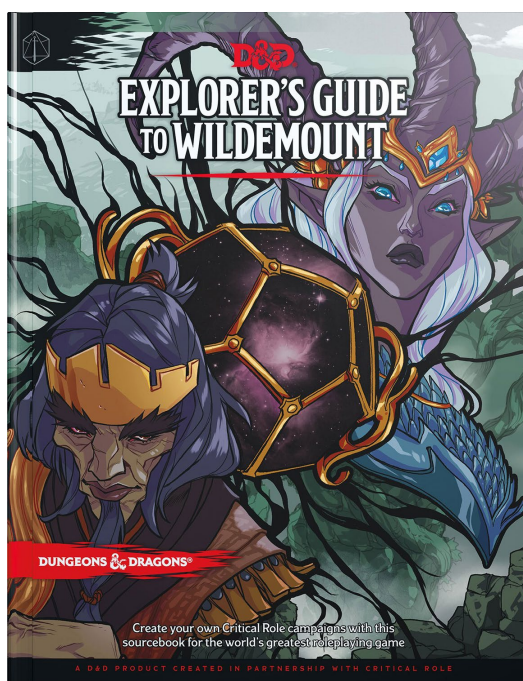
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IN THE WORKS



Explorer's Guide To Wildemount

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...



Explorer's Guide to Wildemount skyrocketed up Amazon's bestseller lists even before it hit shelves, making *Critical Role's* first official fifth edition sourcebook a surefire hit from the start. Yet the team responsible for creating a guide to Matt Mercer's hugely popular world wasn't about to rest on its laurels. Especially Senior Art Director Kate Irwin, whose calm smile and crystalline voice expertly hides the fact that this was a project unlike any other. Curating the stunning visuals in *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*

meant including a number of artists who traditionally create fan art for the show.



(Select to view)

“My job is to pick the right artist for the right task. Art Directors can be a risk-averse bunch so including over twenty ‘new’ artists on this project was a bold step!” Irwin says with a laugh. “Most sourcebooks would draw from an existing pool of staff and it is rare to have any project using this many new artists.”

The decision to source talent from the online community came from Mercer himself and he handed Irwin a list of hand-picked artists. Cross-referencing this with creative talent from *The Chronicles of Exandria* (a previous artistic celebration of *Critical Role*) and a few regular collaborators, Irwin set to work.



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She first began the task of guiding the fresh talent to fill the sourcebook's hefty 300-plus pages under the watchful guidance of Mercer and Chris Perkins.

"Matt was a dream to work with," she says. "He was part of the art review process, checking all of the sketches along with Chris and I. He gave great feedback and I really appreciate the artists he recommended, because to a person they were wonderful."



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“They knocked it out of the park!” Mercer praises. “A lot of those artists who came from the *Critical Role* community are now going to be doing art for future fifth edition sourcebooks. They deserve it. We were super-excited to be able to use this as an opportunity for our community because there are so many talented people out there.”

ADVENTURE PREVIEW

Get a first taste of the wonders of Wildemount! *The Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* Adventure Preview features everything needed to run the Frozen Sick starting adventure, including the full adventure text and the Palebank Village section from the *Wildemount Gazetteer*. Find out more at [D&D Beyond](#) and [Roll20.net](#).

STYLE SHAKE-UP

With new faces in the mix, it was inevitable that different artistic styles would come into play. Irwin was quick to embrace that.

“I would ask the new artists the kind of work they like to lose themselves in, so my matchmaking was symbiotic. As an Art Director you don't want to step on someone's creativity. You don't want to force them into doing something in the way it's always been

done.



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“Much of their work was outside of our traditional style but some of the artists pushed themselves to be ‘more’ D&D in their approach. It was a wonderful meeting in the middle. Some of my favorite pieces in *Explorer’s Guide to Wildemount* are the beautiful paintings showing four characters in different situations. These core adventurers show up in multiple images throughout the book.”



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Irwin was also keen for the art to be inclusive, showcasing a broad spectrum of players and in-game characters.

“Diversity is an important consideration in fifth edition. We are trying to be inclusive and art is at the forefront of that,” she says proudly. “We don’t want our stories to be stereotypical—a really tough character doesn’t have to be a muscular guy, it could be a strong, take-no-nonsense older woman. The people who play D&D are so diverse and it works to have the art reflect that.”

THE D&D ARTIST

“We’re all inspired by the show,” Irwin says, happy that the fertile world of Wildemount gives them so much material to draw upon. “When you’re creating a sourcebook you need landscapes, action scenes and a large variety of different kinds of art. I needed artists who could handle multiple disciplines.



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“A lot of the artists we worked with are character-focused. They’re interested in the details of a character and the motion between different characters. The D&D style evokes a sense of realism. What I love is when you see an image that looks like it’s in the middle of the action—the character’s whole figure is selling the movement and motion. That’s the layering of storytelling I’m looking for.

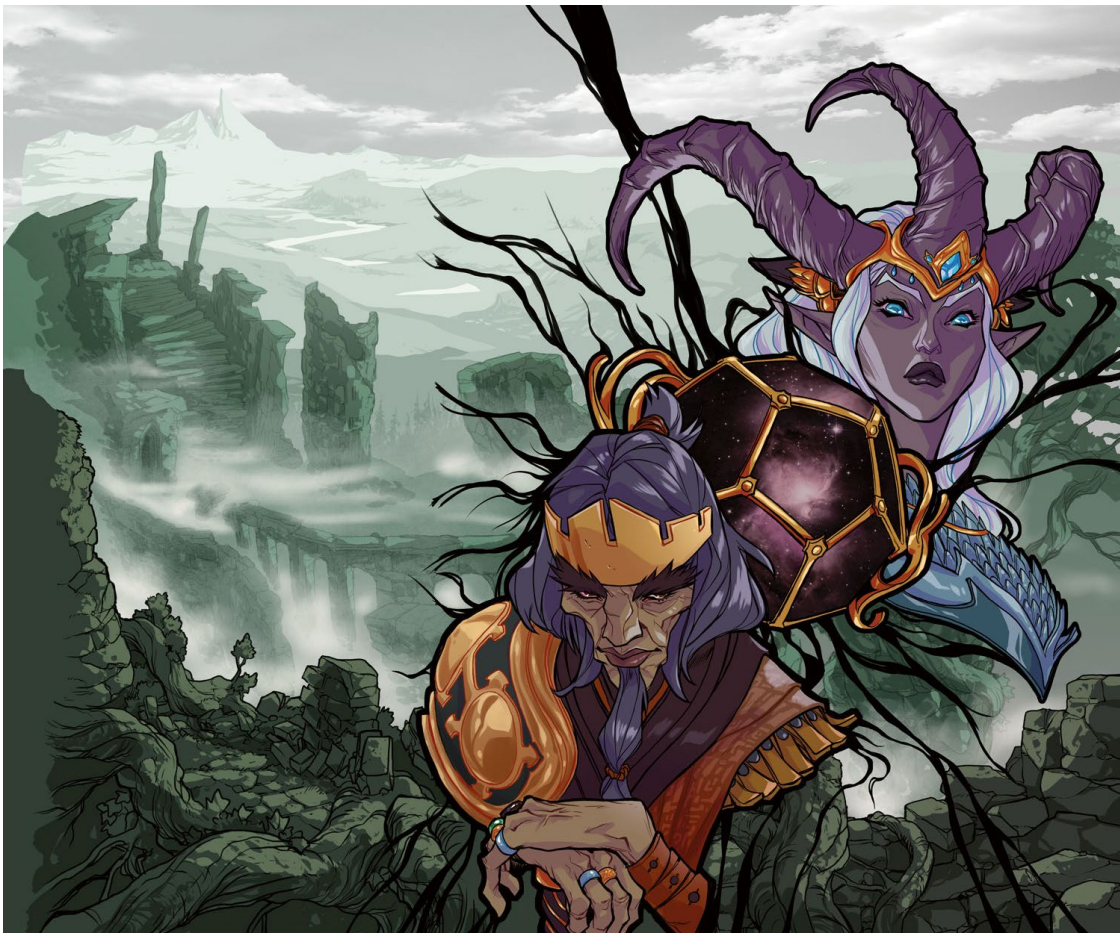
“A lot of our images also take place in dark places like dungeons or forests, so I’m looking for artists who can use light to focus the eye well.”



(Select to view)

Aspiring artists who would like to be considered for future projects can submit their work to artdrop@wizards.com. Naturally, the expected standard is very high.

“Link to your online portfolio or attach a PDF with five of your best pieces to catch our eye,” Irwin advises. “There are hundreds of submissions so if you don’t hear from us, then re-submit every six months when you have something new and interesting. However, re-sending every week or month isn’t going to help.



(Select to view)

“Lead with your best work and keep improving. It’s not a portfolio review so you’re not going to get feedback. Keep that for fellow artists who have your best interests at heart.”

Most importantly? “Keep at it! You can’t wait for inspiration to strike, you have to put pencil to paper, or pen to Wacom Tablet, even when you’re not ‘feeling it’. There are lots of opportunities, resources and communities out there,” she encourages.

“I have Post-it notes on my computer and folders filled with artists whose style I like. I don’t have anything for them yet but they’re on my radar for when the right project comes along.”

Explorer’s Guide to Wildemount is available now with an **MSRP of \$49.95**.

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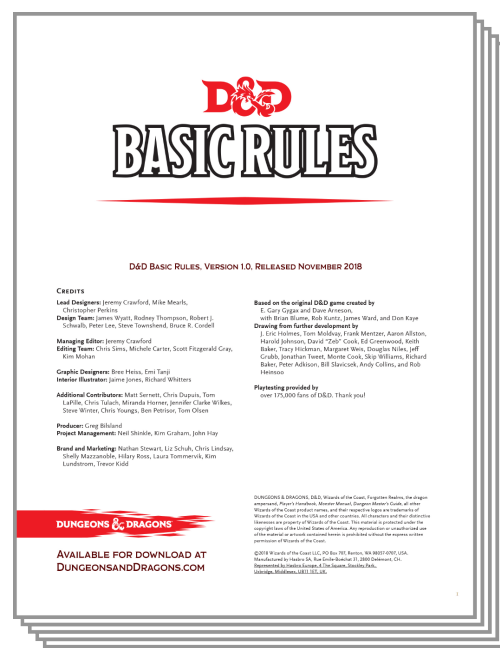
Playing D&D Remotely

Maintaining safe social distancing doesn't mean you can't still gather your party. We check out virtual tabletop software and other online resources.

Matt Chapman, Chris Hislop, Oz Mills

The Wizards of the Coast have retreated to their respective towers for the time being. If you find yourself in a similar situation, we've created the *Stay at Home. Play at Home.* program, bringing together tips and tricks for safely enjoying D&D with others without breaking out your ten-foot poles.

For starters, the *Basic Rules* for Dungeons & Dragons fifth edition are available for free. **Download the 180-page PDF**, which includes everything you need to start playing Dungeons & Dragons: from character creation and how to play the game to 120 spell descriptions and tips for Dungeon Masters.



GET TOGETHER

Taverns can take many forms. While it is not advisable to meet in an *actual* tavern under current government guidelines, you can still gather your party before venturing forth. Programs such as **Discord**, **Google Hangouts**, **Skype**, and **Zoom** are great for both voice and video chat and are free to download.

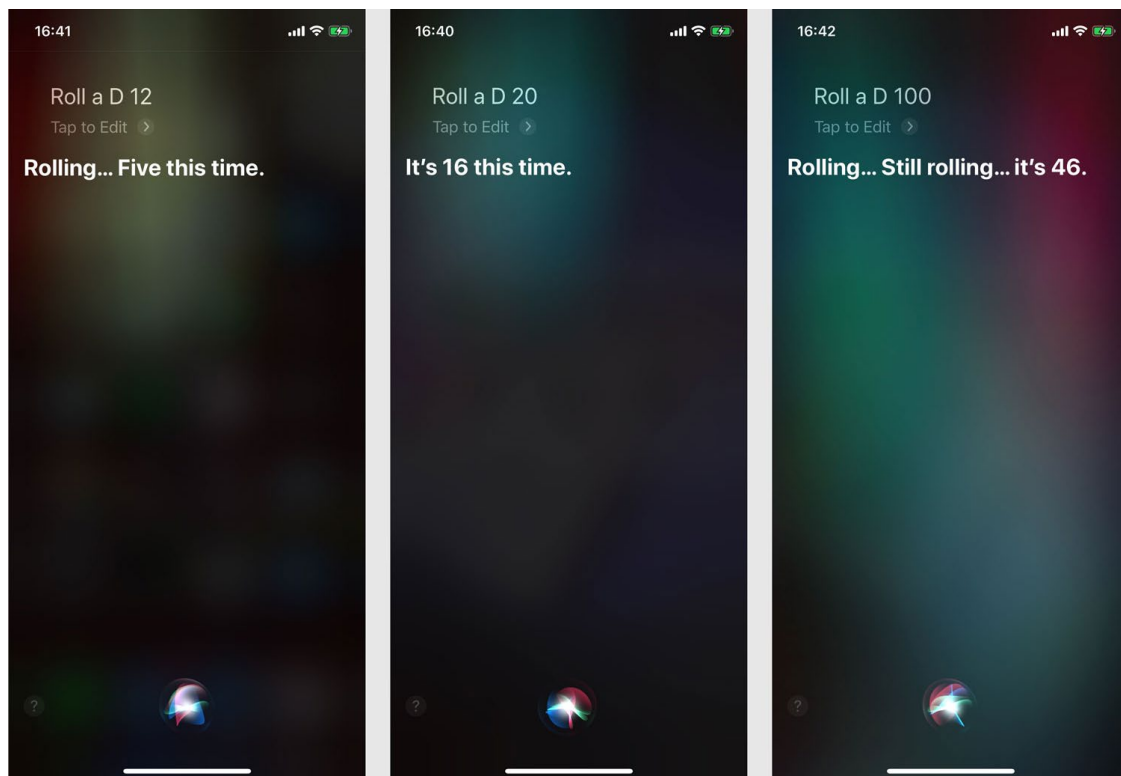
You can also utilize virtual tabletop platforms such as **Roll20** and **Fantasy Grounds** if you still want to use battle maps and minis despite not hanging out around a table. It's even possible to find new groups to adventure with online and we have more information about those virtual services below.

D&D Adventurer's League content can also be played and logged from the comfort of your own home. Learn more about how to organize an official Adventurer's League game **here**. You can also download the updated DDAL Player's Guide and updated DDAL DM's Guide.

No dice? No problem! If you find yourself dice-less you can still roll a natural 20.

Not only has the D&D Team resurrected an ancient and arcane **dice roller** but (as **James Wyatt** discovered a few years ago) virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa can roll a d4, d6, d8, d10, d20, or

d100. Just ask!



You could even consider the DIY route and create your own paper chits by numbering pieces of card and drawing from a hat or bowl to simulate rolling. You'll be playing D&D like folks in 1977!

FREE CONTENT

As an added benefit for gamers following the *Stay at Home. Play at Home.* program, the D&D Team is pleased to offer **free adventures and other resources**. These are available for use whether players are running their own campaigns, are actively participating in the D&D Adventurers League, or are simply interested in learning more about Dungeons & Dragons and trying it out for themselves. Downloadable content will be added each day, Monday-Friday, with certain adventures being made available free for a limited time. Be sure to grab them now while you can!

In addition, with schools closed around the world, many parents and caregivers are also at home with their kids. Those in need of fun and educational material to



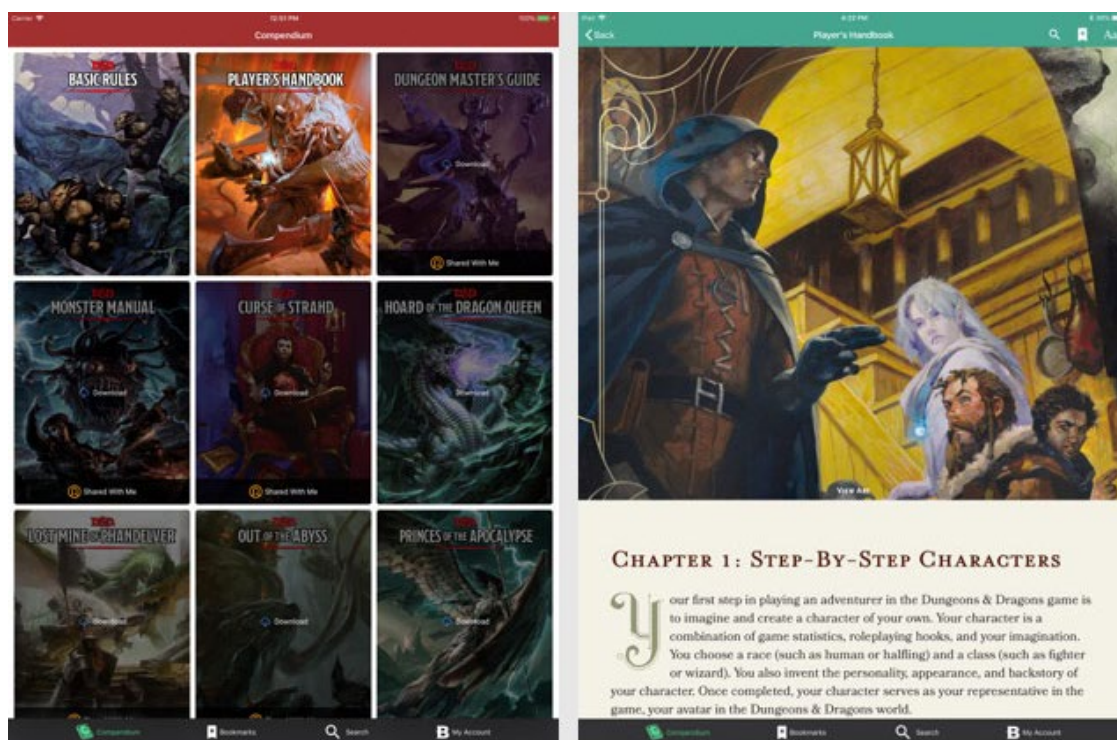
share or play with their children
can also [check here](#).

DIGITAL TOOLSETS

D&D BEYOND

You can also manage your campaign virtually using [D&D Beyond](#), the official digital rules compendium for Dungeons & Dragons. Accessible through a web browser on any device, its tools dramatically simplify D&D sessions and help create an authentic gaming experience at home or remotely.

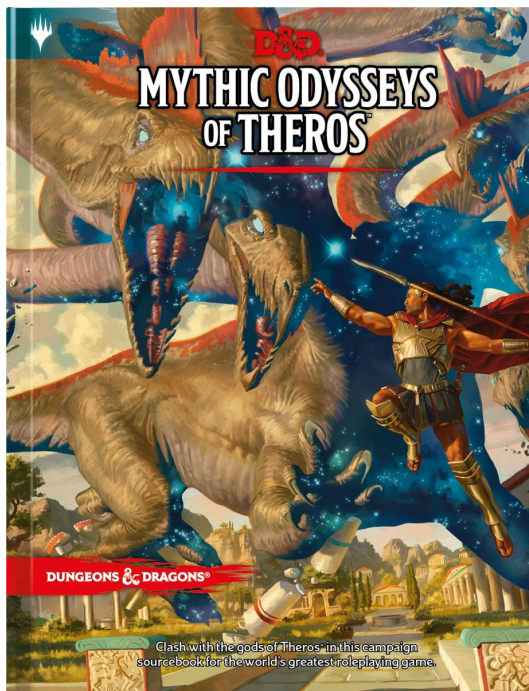
“D&D Beyond is a way to facilitate remote play, especially during these times where classic tabletop gaming needs to be taken into a digital environment. We have a full digital compendium of D&D rules, which integrates with an online character sheet so you know that things are being done correctly, even if people aren’t at the table,” says D&D Beyond co-founder Adam Bradford.



“One of the trickiest things to handle as D&D players is rules management—how does that spell work, what does that rule mean? D&D Beyond can quash any arguments that might arise over exact wording by giving the players shared access to all of the DM’s content, all through their own separate accounts. Being able to simulate the stack of books on the table virtually means that even complex calculations—some of which might arise during character creation, for example—are handled easily. Players and their DMs can be confident that they’ve made games-legal characters using our Character Builder, where all of the math is correct.”

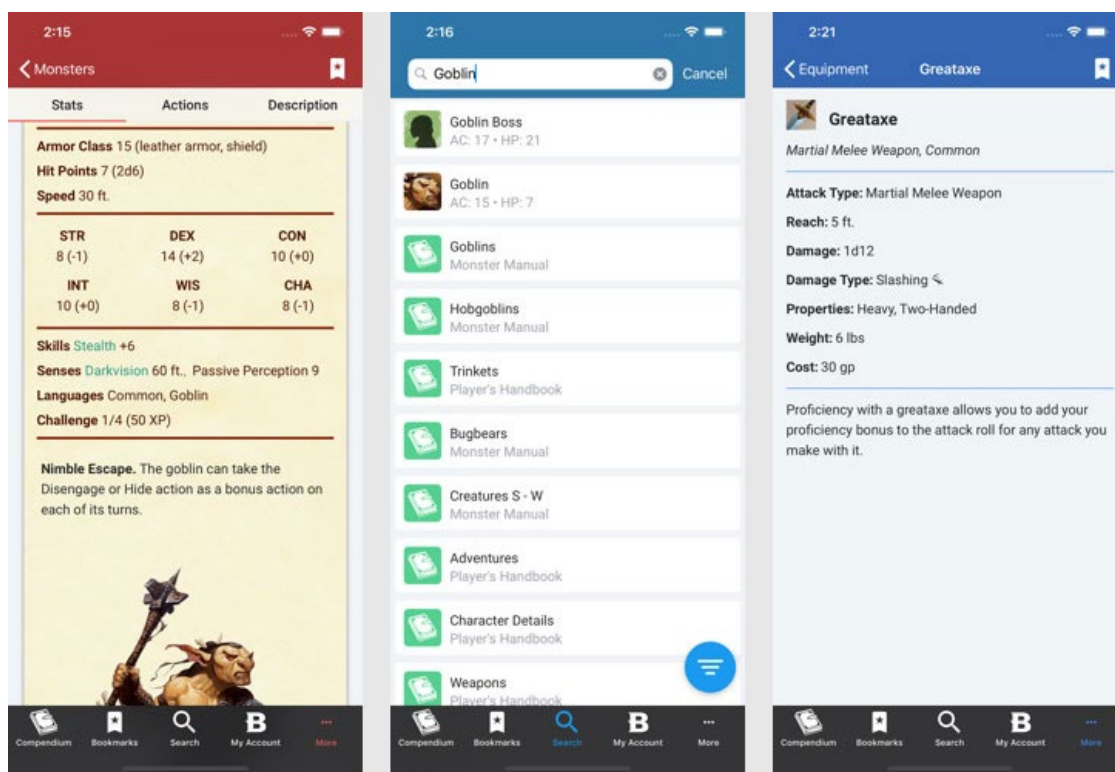
SUPPORT YOUR FLGS

You can still help your friendly local gaming store while staying safe! The first 20 customers preordering a physical copy of *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* from a participating store’s website will also receive a 50% discount on the digital version at D&D Beyond.



“This is particularly true for some of the games’ more complex situations. Having the statistics of a druid’s Wild Shape options, a wizard’s familiar, or a hireling appear in a character’s Extras tab simplifies having to carry around or maintain multiple stat blocks. A full list of spell options for any of the caster classes, including upcasting options, empowers players to make more complex choices using their full arsenal. Players can handle their equipment and gold in one tab, which will also tell them if they are carrying too much stuff around! And for new players, our Quick Build options allow everyone to get started on a level footing, without the need for things to get too complicated.”

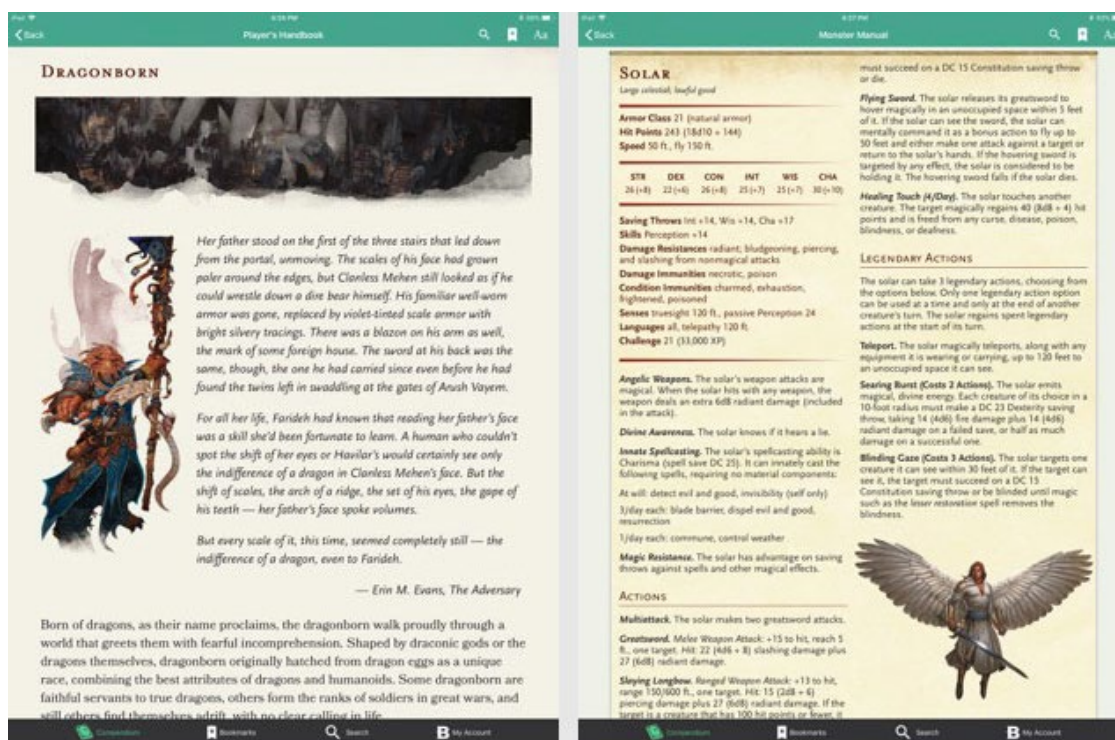
Bradford says DMs can use the Campaign Sharing system to decide which books their players have access to, giving the DM control over which elements are allowed in their game. Each campaign (containing a maximum of twelve unique players) can potentially access everything the DM has purchased on D&D Beyond.



“This used to be limited to three campaigns with a Master Tier subscription, and has now been extended to five during the current situation. That means you can share your content with up to sixty players! We also won’t limit that sharing once we revert back to our original model—you will still be able to share existing campaigns, just not share new ones until you limit back down to three,” he says.

Running a published adventure on D&D Beyond is especially easy as everything is accessible. Cross-linking helps interconnect the adventure and the rules, speeding up the experience by removing the need to flip through pages or check different sourcebooks. New tools have also been added to further aid DMs planning and running the game.

“Our new Encounter Builder has just entered public beta testing. This allows DMs to save encounters to each of their campaigns, balancing the Challenge Rating of various monsters against the players and allowing for some fiendish combinations,” Bradford says. “We are also expanding into virtual tabletops and other virtual environments. We already have our Twitch extension, which places D&D Beyond character sheets on a Twitch overlay and is an ideal way to share details and artwork during a live broadcast.”



Other initiatives include a Combat Tracker (currently in alpha testing with subscribers), a Roll20 extension for Chrome called Beyond20, and Avrae—a Discord bot that helps manage initiative and combat, roll dice, and ties directly into D&D Beyond’s character sheets and monster stat blocks.

“Our latest feature is a Digital Dice Roller, which is currently in alpha testing for subscribers. The developers have done incredible work, making clickable 3D models of dice that feel like they have proper heft and weight. And there are exciting plans for this new feature on the horizon, including customizable skins and epic art!”

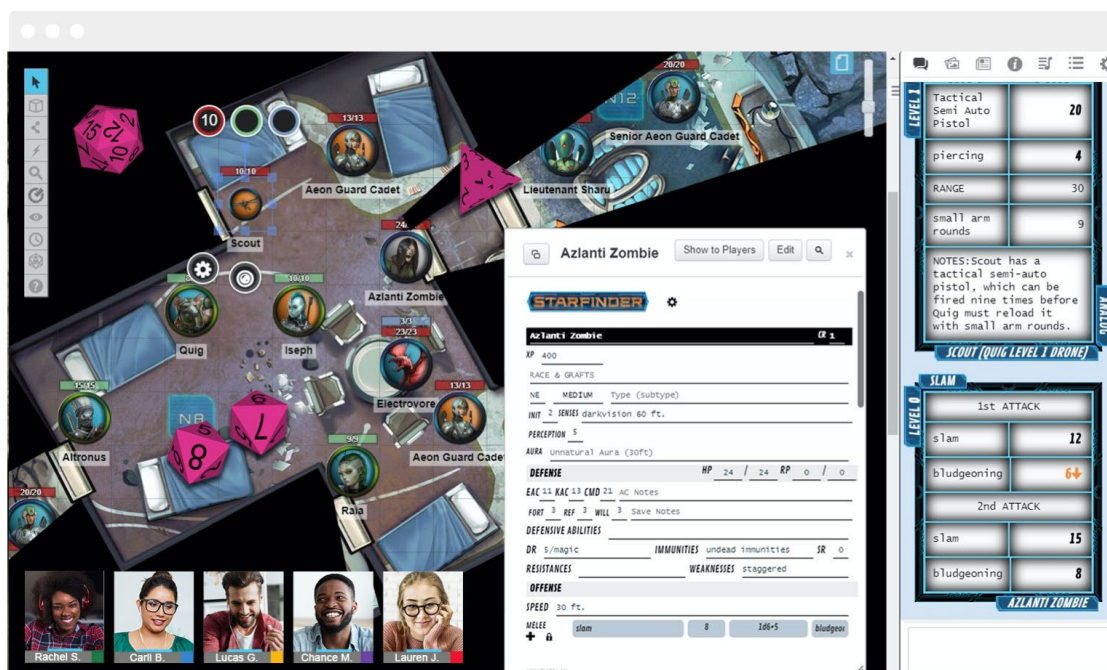
ROLL20

With social interactions now happening at greater distances, the digital world is handily extending the reach of traditional tabletops to include anyone with internet or mobile access. Virtual tabletops such as Roll20 work to completely remove the barriers for those gathering together.

“The thing I really like about Roll20 is that it allows you to play with friends all over the world, or in my case between states. I was a free user. Then I learned how to set things up and ran a few games and it helped me stay in touch with those friends that are between states,”

says Trivia Fox, director of licensing at Roll20, who used the software for four years before being hired by the company.

“It also helps me to run games. I have some social anxiety, so being able to be in my home, at a computer, and being behind a screen helps me a lot.”



Roll20 also works hard to lessen the technical burden for all participants. Fox says the **Crash Course section** of its Getting Started material is a great place for new players to learn the ropes.

“The Crash Course document is one big page that says, ‘You’ve never been here before? Here you go!’ It walks you through our system with lots of videos and other explanations. In addition, our marketplace has both free and paid products to really help ease the transition from playing an in-person game to taking that game online,” they explain.

“Our *Lost Mine of Phandelver* conversion was also designed to be a ‘how to play on Roll20’ guide. It walks you through how to use all of the components.”

SUPPORT CONTENT CREATORS

Many content creators have been impacted by the current



situation. Check out their work on the [Dungeon Master's Guild](#) and toss a few coins their way if you are able. You can also support the online streaming community by watching their adventures. Check out the [Dungeons & Dragons category](#) on Twitch and find a new group to watch.

Alongside the maps and tokens that ease the interactions at the virtual tabletop, the software also boasts a powerful dice-rolling engine. Quantum Roll uses photons to generate random numbers, calculating fluctuations in the power of a beam of light to decide whether or not you rolled a 20.

Individuals looking for new D&D players can also use Roll20 to form new gaming groups or find one-shot games. The Looking For Group tool allows people to advertise games and have people apply to play, while the drop-in games allow people to advertise that they'll be running a certain game at a designated time. With five million Roll20 users worldwide before the lockdown, that's a large pool of DMs and players to choose from even before other online contacts are taken into account.

"To this day, I will ping my Discord channel and say, 'Hey, I'm gonna run *For The Queen*. Does anyone want to hop in? I can then have a game link ready in two minutes and we can all play a game. It's so easy to drop in and drop out."

The team behind Roll20 is not sitting on its laurels, however, and has already [announced a suite of changes](#) intended to improve the service for all users.

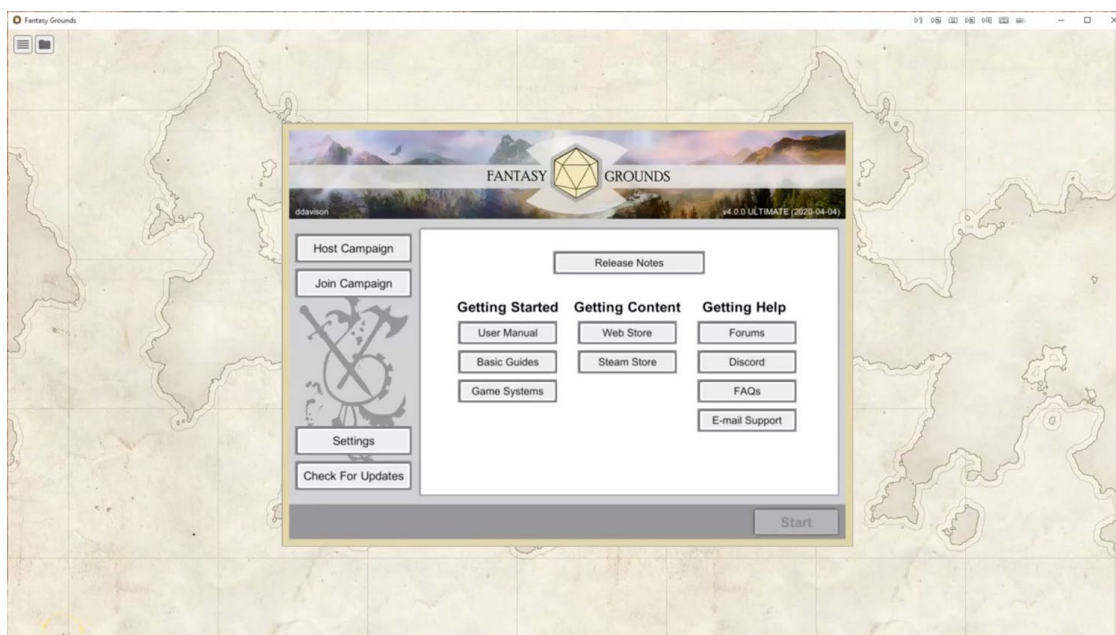
"We have relaunched our dynamic lighting toolset. That's something we've been working on for more than a year and has been rebuilt from the ground up. It was tested on the Dev server by Pro

subscribers, who got to play with the tools early.”

Those looking to join the virtual world of Roll20 can find *Play at home. Stay at Home.* resources [here](#).

FANTASY GROUNDS

Virtual tabletop system Fantasy Grounds is currently in the midst of an upgrade and its new tools are designed to make it easier for Dungeon Masters to connect with their players. Fantasy Grounds Classic is still in operation, with **Fantasy Grounds Unity** now available to download in early access.



“We’re recommending that users who are brand new to the virtual tabletop space choose the early access version of Fantasy Grounds Unity. Even though it’s still being performance-tuned at this point it’s the easiest way for them to get started with the game,” recommends Doug Davison, President of Fantasy Grounds’ developer SmiteWorks.

“Not only does Fantasy Grounds Unity include all of the coolest new features, it’s also the easiest way for DMs to host a game and connect with their players. Our new lobby system removes the need for complicated network configuration or any of the steps the previous version asked players to go through in order to play.”

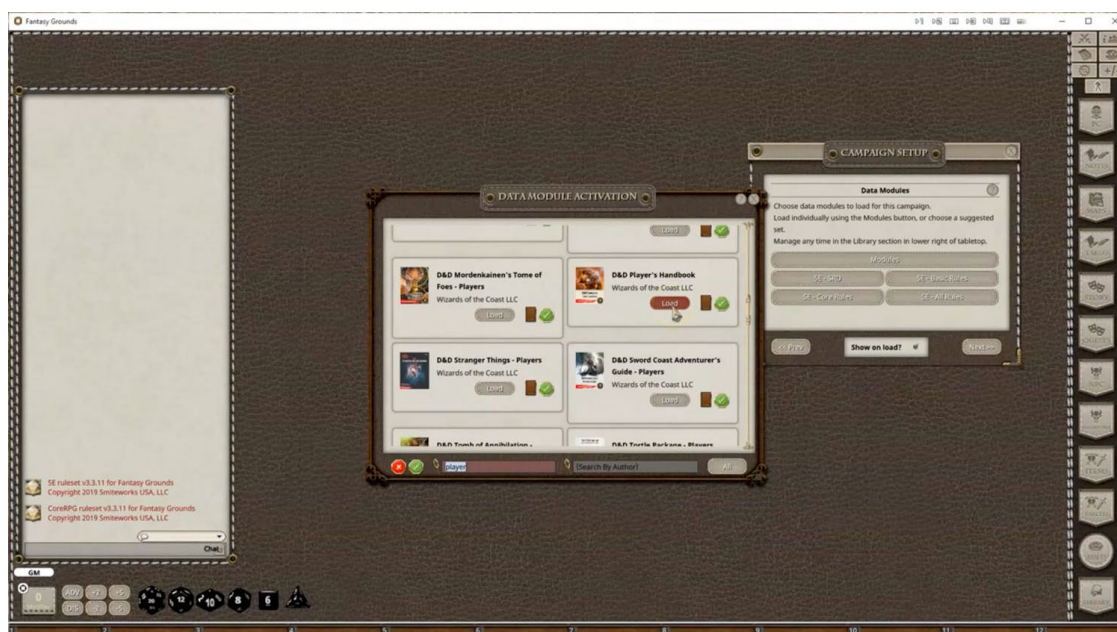


WIZKIDS TAKE & PAINT

WizKids has transformed its in-store Paint Night events into Take & Paint events. If your friendly local gaming store is offering delivery or curbside pickup of WizKids unpainted miniatures you can still join these classes online at the scheduled day and time to benefit from their expert tips and tricks. Further details and previous tutorials are available free at the [Take & Paint website](#).

Players can build their characters using the classes and subclasses in any of the fifth edition sources that the Dungeon Master has access to. They can also include races, classes or features purchased from the DMs Guild and use third-party resources such as material from Kobold Press.

“They can also modify classes very easily in our system,” Davison says. “If they like the barbarian from the *Player’s Handbook* for instance, but want to change a couple of abilities or swap out a class feature, the DM can unlock it and make their own version of the barbarian.”



Players currently have to create a character in the system from a blank slate. Davison says his team is working on a character creation wizard with a much more intuitive interface that will be releasing soon. However, many of the features in Fantasy Grounds are designed specifically to aid DMs.

“A lot of the bells and whistles help speed up running and managing a campaign. The preparation of encounters—even random encounters—is built in. That includes initiatives to make it easy to keep track of combat, such as what happens when you drop a *fireball* or a spell over a whole group of enemies, as well as tracking the other effects that are in place and when they expire,” Davison explains.

“We automate all of that to make it quicker. Once you get used to the system, you can run through many more encounters and events than you would usually be able to sitting at the table.”



Dynamic line of sight has also recently been implemented in Fantasy Grounds Unity, so players uncover things as their characters move around corners and open and close doors. Secret doors and similar options appear flush with the wall so only the DM can see them until a character passes their search check. Once a door has been discovered, the DM can open it and players can walk through those walls.

In order to run Fantasy Grounds, users need a Windows or Mac PC (a Linux version of the software is in the works and will be rolling out soon). While users can find [instructions and tutorials](#) to help them use the software on the Fantasy Grounds website, Davison suggests heading to [Fantasy Grounds College](#) for an interactive learning experience. This fan-run organization has its own Discord channel and runs free classes to train people how to DM and do everything within the software. If you're not satisfied with the tools Fantasy Grounds supplies for any reason, the company offers a 30-day refund policy.

“Our main goal is to make sure that Fantasy Grounds is the right fit for you and your group,” Davison says. You can grab a license or a subscription and try it out and if it doesn't work out for you for any reason, we'll refund you.”

BACK TO TOP



Cool Britannia: Live-play in the UK

The stars of streams, stage, and podcasts tell us why the D&D community in England, Scotland, and Wales puts the “Great” into Great Britain.

When the listings schedule for the official **D&D Twitch channel** is published each week, it now contains more content than ever before. Just when you thought there couldn’t possibly be more Dungeons & Dragons to watch, the British continue their invasion.

“The appetite for Dungeons & Dragons is vast. Even though there are so many creators and a wealth of great shows out there already, people still want more. They love it and want to make it part of their daily routine,” says Johnny Chiodini, Dungeon Master for both the *Dungeonbreaker* and *Oxventure* D&D streams in the UK. “It’s an exciting time and there’s a buzz around the UK scene in general. The community is growing and those D&D creators are collaborating more fully.”



Oxventure (Photo: Andrew Hoyle)

“Dungeons & Dragons is now almost a genre in itself,” adds Matt Jarvis, Editor-in-Chief of the *Dicebreaker* board games website, who plays Morbos in the *Dungeonbreaker* stream. “People will watch four or five different sitcoms because they like the different characters and stories, and it’s the same with D&D.”

STAY AT HOME, WATCH AT HOME

As mentioned on the *D&D website*, during these days of social distancing it helps support the streaming community by watching their adventures online. Liveplay games and streamed content can be found on the official D&D Twitch channel as well as the broader Dungeons & Dragons category—and you may find a new group to watch!

The expanding UK scene is well placed to provide more live play

Dungeons & Dragons thanks to the time difference with the United States. A game streamed at 6pm British Summer Time lands at 10am PST and 1pm EST, making it ideal for the growing number of fans who watch several shows a week.

“The time difference has brought us American viewers,” says Chiodini. “Each episode of *Dungeonbreaker* airs around 3pm UK time and we get some people who’ve stayed up to watch it and some who are just waking up. There’s a wholesome energy to people popping into the chat and saying, ‘Good morning everyone, I’m sitting here with a cup of coffee.’”

VOICE ACTING

One unusual biproduct of the many fantasy worlds gracing our television and cinema screens is that it sounds entirely normal for a party of wizards, rogues, fighters, bards, and barbarians to be speaking with British accents. Whether it’s the cast of *Baldur’s Gate III* or the regional dialects differentiating *Game of Thrones*’ Northern peoples from those in King’s Landing, the UK often provides the soundtrack for fantasy landscapes.

“That can be a big selling point, particularly for an American audience who are very big on British accents,” says Ellie Sparrow, who plays Celestia Stardust in *Flintlocks & Fireballs*. “When I ask someone, ‘How does a dwarf sound?’ The entire Scottish nation stands up and says, ‘I can play D&D now!’ That comes from dwarves in *Lord of the Rings* and borrows from the very north of Scotland,” adds Paddy Gillen, Dungeon Master of the *Haggis & Dragons* podcast.



Flintlocks & Fireballs (Photo: Niel Munro)

Gillen has infused the world of *Haggis & Dragons* with landmarks from local history and real-life elements of his country's wars as a way to make the podcast stand out.

“I wanted to make it more personal. I’ve used old Gaelic names for towns and taken Celtic words from Cornish and Irish history. Only half of the voices I do in-game are Scottish, and many others are Welsh, Irish, Cornish, from Yorkshire and all over the UK. I want it to be a melting pot of voices without stereotyping to make it as rounded as possible and create more of an audio drama,” he says.

BUILDING A FOLLOWING

One very British sentiment that needs to be overcome is a shyness when it comes to self-promotion, as many Brits may find it difficult at best (and socially impossible at worst) to market their own work.

“Don’t be afraid to promote yourself. You’ll see a lot of people posting and saying, ‘Sorry, shameless self-promotion!’ but you shouldn’t be ashamed of it,” says Sparrow, acknowledging that it’s built-in for British people not to make a fuss. “Make *all* the fuss!”

One way of getting the word out is to collaborate with the wider streaming community. Sparrow suggests talking to people on social media and connecting to find out what they’re doing, before

swapping promos and even guest starring on other people's podcasts and streams.

"Don't be afraid to punch above your weight and talk to people who are bigger than you when you first start out. We're all here doing something creative. They might not have time to collaborate with you, but the worst that can happen is nothing. They're not going to judge you for reaching out to them, they're more likely to be interested in what you're doing," Sparrow suggests.

"Whether you're creating a twelve-episode season or a long-running show, it takes time to build up an audience," advises Jason Phelps, Dungeon Master for *Flintlocks & Fireballs*. "This is a marathon not a sprint and you're going to be in this for the long haul."

SOCIAL MOBILITY

It's also never been easier to talk directly to those most likely to support your efforts thanks to the connective power of social media. Yet this conversation doesn't have to wait until you have something to show the world. *Flintlocks & Fireballs* spent three months recording before the first podcast was released, and Sparrow and Phelps used that time to build momentum for the release date, accruing a few hundred followers by the time it went live.

"Be a part of the online community a good month before going live, instead of going online immediately with your first episode and wondering why no one cares," Phelps suggests.

"It's such a big, sprawling community, that's the first thing that hit all of us, and we've grown really well," says Ian McGill, the DM for the *Dragon Wings* podcast. "I'd love to put it all down to the content itself, the audio quality and production values, but a really big part of it is that Dav and Hannah make sure that everyone who interacts with us on social media is part of a natural conversation."

"I like social media but I've never been one to hang out in a fandom and talk to people. I very quickly found that it was fun to chat and interact," replies Hannah May,



Dragon Wings

who plays tiefling rogue Nothing in *Dragon Wings*. “Social media also dispels the myths people used to have about who exactly plays D&D because there’s such a wide spectrum of players online. The people speaking to us have often thought we’re quite funny and

that’s usually enough to convince them to give the show a listen. We’re now really friendly with some of them and have even posted badges and bits of merch out to them.”

“We’ve found having a moderator who is one of us in Twitch chat while we’re streaming is very helpful for engaging with fans,” adds Chris Hislop, DM and co-founder of *Adventurers Wanted*.



Adventurers Wanted

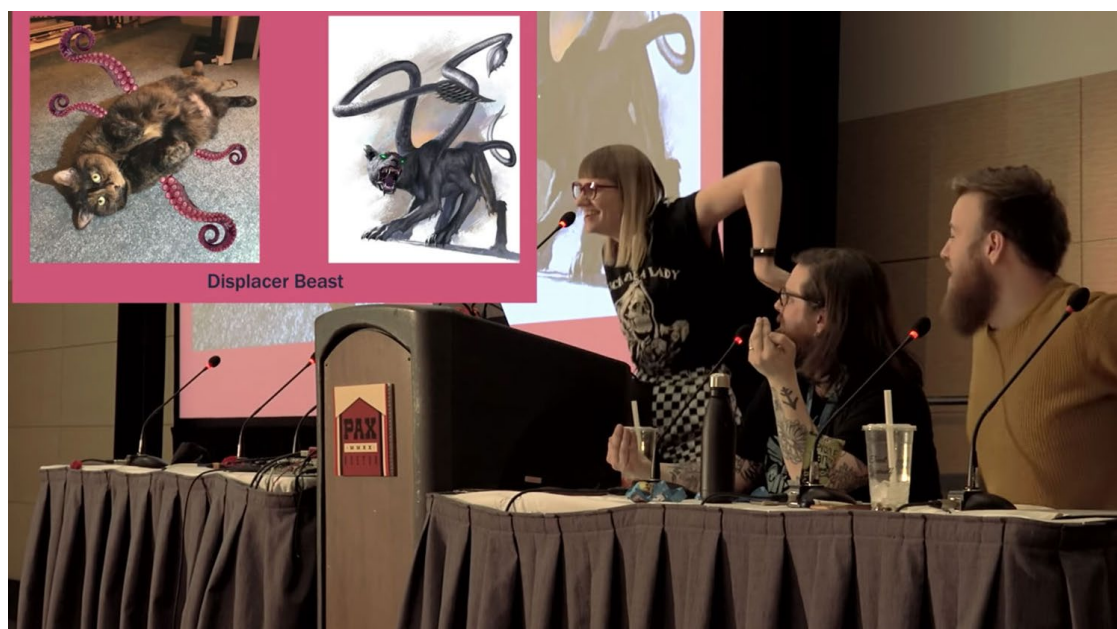
BUCKING THE TREND

These regular interactions between fans and creators are a big part of

the daily life of UK streams and podcasts. While some elements of social media are portrayed as hostile and unforgiving, this easy back and forth bucks that trend. Phelps talks of a community that is “very kind and very enthusiastic,” while Gillen explains how he “puts this content out for fun and is really grateful to everyone who gives us kind compliments and feedback—I love feedback.”

“It’s got to the point where I don’t go a day without talking to somebody from the community. They’re always tweeting me or sending things on the Discord server. That growth has been a major evolution,” says Sparrow.

“We went to PAX East in February with our panel **The 10 Most Ridiculous Monsters in Dungeons & Dragons**. It was an evening slot and the show floor had already closed but we filled the room. As a curiosity, we asked people to put their hands up if they’d heard of Dicebreaker and it was scarcely twenty per cent of the room. It sounds counterintuitive but that was a delight for us because we were introducing ourselves and the website to them. At the end of the panel you can then say, ‘We’ve got a lot more of this kind of content, so come fill your boots.’”



Dicebreaker at PAX East

Another draw is the chance for an audience to watch a session of their favorite stream or podcast being performed or recorded live. Acting out a storyline in front of an audience pushes the Venn diagram of Dungeons & Dragons and live theatre ever closer. For

Hislop, whose *Adventurers Wanted* group appears once a month in an **Islington theater** and has performed for the past three years at the **Edinburgh Fringe**, the two formats are very close.

“We established from an early point that D&D is a theatrical format that allows for complete freedom. It’s not about going into a dungeon to defeat a monster; it’s about not being afraid to go into crazy environments to do crazy things. If we can work out the logistics and rules of how anything will work in D&D, you can then figure out how you translate that in a storytelling environment,” he explains.

“We quickly worked out that nothing’s off the table for storytelling as long as we can find ways to make the rules fit. In the *Player’s Handbook* it says the only limit is your imagination, and being able to take that into a theatrical context means we’ve always aimed high in storytelling terms.”

LIVE PLAY

A theater production can come with other potential pitfalls, as *Questing Time* DM Paul Foxcroft (who hosts a monthly game in a **central London theater**) found when he staged his own Edinburgh show in 2018. Each adventure he had written was supposed to follow on from the last but it became impossible to make that happen because—D&D players being D&D players—they didn’t follow the breadcrumbs that had been left for them by the DM.

“We appeared at the Fringe again last year and every night we ran an hour-long game that felt like a complete adventure, which was a challenge in itself. This time I wrote seven different adventures and performed a different one on each night of the week, which made a lot more sense,” he says.

Another element of live shows is belief. Will the audience which listens to or watches you online turn up to see you in person? What if no-one comes?

“Our first ever live show was serendipitous because Johnny had a connection at the Vaults festival,” remembers Jane Douglas, host, writer and editor for **Outside Xbox**, who plays Prudence in the *Oxventure* livestream. “That was the first time tickets were on sale so

we could gauge whether this was something people liked to watch on YouTube or whether they would leave their home to watch it.”

“We said we’d regard it as a success if there were more people in the audience than there were on stage!” says May of Playnation Games’s invitation for *Dragon Wings* to play a live session at its Croydon store. “We set our sights low but we did easily pass that.”

Once the dice have been rolled and the session is over, there’s a chance for fans to chat with the players and DM without the barrier of a social media account. These personal interactions help nurture a strong fan base, although they can also show the performers how much they’ve already touched their hearts of their audience.

“The community is a massively important part of our live shows. There are people we’ve seen once a year for the past three years because they came to play an hour in our show at Edinburgh. Or maybe we met them in the first year and they connected on Twitter and now they watch us on Twitch,” says Chloe Mashiter, co-founder and DM at *Adventurers Wanted*. “It’s great to chat with everyone in the bar downstairs after a show and hear what they thought about it. You might even get a local coming up to chat who has never been to anything like this before but bought a ticket and thought it was really good fun.”

“This year we did our first live *Flintlocks & Fireballs* show at **PodUK** and lots of fans came to see the show and sang along with the theme tune,” Sparrow says. “They gave us gifts they’d made for us and we had dinner with some of them, it was lovely. Some people flew over to see us, which is mad! I’m still not really over that.”

ART LOVERS

Having nurtured a strong, loving community it’s time to reap the benefits. The first sign that your adventures have struck a deeper chord with the audience is a fundamental reward: fan art.

“When you start podcasting you think maybe twenty people will listen and if someone says nice things about it once that’ll be lovely. We didn’t think we’d get **fan art** and we immediately did. That was after episode one from **Eddie Widdows**, who creates cute anime art.

The nice thing about *Flintlocks & Fireballs* being audio is there's a lot of different takes on the characters," says Sparrow.

"I've been blown away by some of the contributions we've had," adds Gillen. "We've had some *Haggis & Dragons* character portraits, some busts, and Captain Nemo on Twitter also did me a very solid favor by creating fan art of the NPC I based on Ming the Merciless. We even had a comic-book cover where someone had listened to the whole of episode one and created what they thought a comic based on that episode would look like."

The appreciation doesn't stop at art, though, as fans find ever more creative ways to celebrate a D&D adventure they enjoy. That might be *Dragon Wings* devotees emailing in the perfect recipe (true to their name, the players and DM make up a batch of wings before each game), or fan fiction, character cosplay, and even a tattoo for *Oxventure*!

"We sing a lot of shanties in *Flintlocks & Fireballs* and people will take those songs and cover them, which is lovely. And my character Celestia uses finger puppets to cast *Tasha's hideous laughter*," says Sparrow. "Someone made finger puppets of the characters in the party and sent them to me. The lady who made them also wrote me an in-character letter so we made them canon by having Celestia receive the package in game."

FIND THE FUN

If you've been watching streams, listening to podcasts, and even reading this article and thinking, 'I could do that!' then Ralph Lim of the *Snap, Crackle and Pop Culture* podcast has some advice:

"Definitely go for it! We're at a point in time where technology has become cheaper and more accessible and this is something you can create yourselves. But make the kind of show that you'd want to listen to, rather than trying to manufacture content for a specific audience. If you overthink things too much, you'll lose the spirit of it."

"Enjoy it," agrees Sparrow. "It's a lot of work and if you've been doing it for a month and you're

not enjoying it, stop. If you love it, keep going come hell or high water.” “Having fun results in a longer, more cared-for game and better interactions between players and characters,” adds Gillen. “You can fake laugh but you can’t fake fun.”



Snap, Crackle, Pop Culture

“Be true to whatever you do,” echoes May. “Our *Dragon Wings* games are silly and we don’t take them too seriously. The storytelling and pacing is important but we didn’t set out to make an epic arc. That’s not what we do and if we’d have tried it wouldn’t have rung true. If only four people were listening to our podcast I’d be having just as good a time.”

Check out the listings schedule for the official [D&D Twitch channel](#) to watch some of these streams and swipe to the next page to see a full listing for all the UK Dungeons & Dragons live play games featured here.

BACK TO TOP

Streaming Highlights

Britannia rules the (air)waves this issue as we highlight content from our UK streamers.



Having chatted with some of the amazing talent creating UK streams (swipe to the previous page for more on that) we got a unique insight into the more technical aspects of their hobby. The varying styles and tones of their games couldn't be more different and the same goes for the way they create their liveplay experiences.

Flintlocks & Fireballs leans heavily into the improvisation skills of its players and Dungeon Master, which doesn't leave much room for editing. "We're not a heavily edited podcast—we might take out some of the tech breaks but we're not trying to sound like an audio drama," says Ellie Sparrow, who plays Celestia Stardust. "We want it to sound like improv so more often than not we let the improv run, especially as a lot of the fun comes from messing that up."

The *Snap, Crackle and Pop Culture* podcast, on the other hand, is happy to edit out the "umms" and "ahhs" of its players, although that

process also stops short of making it seem too polished to maintain a homemade feel. “If people are giving us an hour of their day, we didn’t want to feel that we were wasting their time,” explains Ralph Lim, who plays Greentooth in the podcast’s D&D adventures. “I edited the recording to make it punchier and less choppy and it was much more pleasurable to listen to. I also thought we could add special effects or backing tracks but it does feel more like a home game if we keep it to the bare bones.”

One of the other key differences is in the way episodes are structured. Certain shows are locked into a set run time, while others are recorded offline as a larger gaming session and then broken up into smaller episodes. The skill in creating the first type is all in the pacing.

“It’s one of the trickiest things to get right when streaming,” says Chloe Mashiter, DM for *Adventurers Wanted’s Eberron: Terminus*. “You want the players to have time for intercharacter roleplay but things are always being driven forward to try and end the session in a satisfying place. You always plan to give it that nice shape but it takes a lot of practice to be able to do that.”

Mashiter says the skills needed are similar to the techniques used when writing for TV and the theater because it’s all about the story beats and deciding how much of the narrative you can capture in the allotted time.

“The *Adventurers Wanted* [Patreon website](#) often shows the difference between the show I had planned and the one that actually happened. I have to make snap decisions to make things run on time and the weird bonus content you find there gives an insight into the things I had to cut,” she reveals.

Other podcasts may not need to create a show that runs for a specific time, but their skill lies in knowing how to split their content into satisfying episodes.

“We’re not professionals. It’d be unfeasible for us to play and create snippets that are exactly an hour long. Instead we usually play for two nights and find good places to stop to have a bit of a breather, splitting that up into five or six episodes,” says Josh Somerville-Jacklin, DM of the *Snap, Crackle and Pop Culture* podcast.

“I take a full night’s play, which is usually around four hours’ worth of recording, and break that up into episodes,” adds Michael Ireland, discussing the monthly *Haggis & Dragons* game. “I have to make the creative decision of where one episode ends and the next one begins. Do you take an exciting scene and use it as the climax of one episode or have it kick off the next episode with a bang? Episodes are usually closer to forty minutes but there are times I’ll create a thirty-minute episode and message our DM Paddy with my reasons.”

Paul Foxcroft, DM of *Questing Time*, discovered a different editing issue when he investigated transitioning the live show from the stage to YouTube.

“Having a live audience in the room for *Questing Time* makes the editing of it way weirder,” he reveals, although his answer to the problem is both ingenious and retro. “We’re going to lampshade the fact that we are editing it. Remember the transition between scenes in the *Transformers* cartoon, with the Autobots symbol flip? It’ll be something like that.”

Another top tip from our UK streamers and podcasters is to build up a reserve of episodes if it’s possible to do so, as a way to relieve the pressure of recording. Ian McGill, the DM for the *Dragon Wings* podcast, reveals that the show’s initial episode was put online in October 2019 but the team recorded its first material way back in February of the same year.

“We had three or four sessions recorded and we can get four 40-minute episodes out of each session, so we already had twelve to sixteen episodes ready when we aired the first one. It’s very tempting to drop them online as soon as they’re ready but if you’re hobbyist creators and you’ve got busy lives it’s useful to have that backlog as a buffer,” he says.

“We release one episode weekly and we’ve never had a week off,” adds Sparrow. “Having ten episodes ready to go means we can go away for three weeks’ holiday and still be okay. But it also means if someone’s having a bad week we don’t need to record. That buffer allows us to be careful with each other and look after our own mental health. We never want this to be something we dread doing, we always want it to be fun.”

Below we provide further information about our UK streamers and podcasters, including details on where to find them, how to access their shows, and a jumping-off point to help you catch up with recent adventures and avoid having to start at the very beginning.

ADVENTURERS WANTED

“Being an LGBTIA+ led company, we have worked very hard ourselves and with consultants to make our games representative from a gender and sexuality perspective. We work to correct misgendering and make sure there are characters of multiple genders that are important and have narrative purpose, both as players in the stream and built into the story,” says Chris Hislop, trans DM and co-founder of *Adventurers Wanted*. “Not all guards are dudes. Processing that involves quite a big sea change. But being representative means we have huge numbers of fans who say, ‘I see myself in the characters that you put on stage.’ And that’s so important.”

Currently streaming: *Adventurers Wanted Eberron: Terminus*, 6pm BST (10am PST, 1pm EST) on Mondays at Twitch.tv/dnd and Twitch.tv/adventurerswanted

The Full Monty: *All past Adventurers Wanted streams*

Recent Jumping-Off Point: *Adventurers Wanted Baldur’s Gate: Framed*

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[Learn more](#)

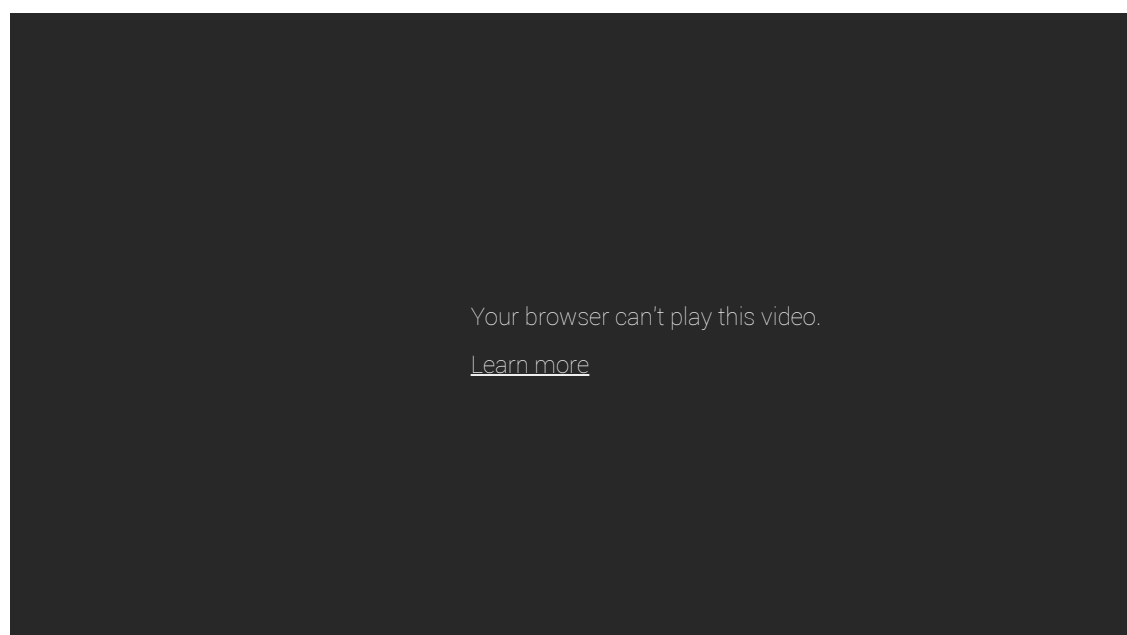
DUNGEONBREAKER

“The success of *Dungeonbreaker* is a testament to the team itself,” says Matt Jarvis, Editor-in-Chief of the *Dicebreaker* website. “We clicked almost immediately and a lot of D&D comes down to that dynamic. What’s allowed us to excel is a little bit of luck, a lot of hard work on the part of the team, and also finding those things people latch onto—whether it’s a goblin called Tim or something else.”

Currently Streaming: *Dungeonbreaker: Crate Expectations*

The Full Monty: *The Dungeonbreaker* playlist

Recent Jumping-Off Point: *Dungeonbreaker: Blimp My Ride*



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[Learn more](#)

DRAGON WINGS

A bard, a pickpocket, a pit fighter, and a warlock walk into a solicitor’s office. Meet four strangers as they embark on an epic and perilous quest to find... the perfect spice mix for their enchanted chicken wing business. True to their name, the team cooks up a batch of chicken wings before each session as DM Ian McGill sets up.

“We do actually eat them every recording,” Hannah May confirms.

“It’s quite tense in the two minutes between the wings being ready and all the pictures of them being taken,” McGill admits. “And it’s a sight to behold when the bowl goes down on the table. It’s not long before there are no wings left,” Dav Singh adds.

New *Dragon Wings* podcast episodes appear every fortnight on Tuesdays.

Currently Streaming: *Latest Dragon Wings episodes*

The Full Monty: *Dragon Wings from episode one*

[LISTEN TO THE LATEST EPISODE](#)

FLINTLOCKS & FIREBALLS

“It was Jason Phelps’ birthday and we had some friends over and played a one-shot. We realized that myself, Jason, Robbie Bellekom, and Sam Burns were all very good at improvising. It was the most fun we’ve ever had playing D&D and the revelation at the table was, ‘We should do something with this!’” says Ellie Sparrow.

“We’re all professional actors and we all love improv. Taking part in a D&D campaign is long-form improv, which you never get to experience in any other format. We started recording not long after that. And that birthday one-shot had very broad strokes versions of two of our *Flintlocks* characters.”

Currently Streaming: *Latest Flintlocks & Fireballs Episodes*

The Full Monty: *Flintlocks & Fireballs Episode One: Fake Beards & Broken Necks*

Recent Jumping-Off Point: *Flintlocks & Fireballs Chapter Fifteen: To The Sea*

[LISTEN TO THE LATEST EPISODE](#)

HAGGIS & DRAGONS

“The first thing we thought was how does this start? Our initial idea was that everyone starts off dead,” says Michael Ireland, who plays Harald in *Haggis & Dragons*. “They’re on an even keel,” continues DM Paddy Gillen. “There’s no need to worry about equipment, backgrounds, wealth—everyone’s dead. Create your character and then I’m going to kill them. It’s the first time I’ve had a TPK as a Dungeon Master and it happened before they rolled any dice, so I’m thrilled with that.”

It’s not all doom and gloom, though. “There’s a reason we’re dead, as well as an explanation for how we got there and where that leads with the story itself. When you start off in the afterlife, the world is your oyster,” says an upbeat Ireland.

Currently Streaming: *Latest Haggis & Dragons Episodes*

The Full Monty: *Haggis & Dragons on Spotify*

Recent Jumping-Off Point: *Haggis & Dragons Episodes 1-6 Recap*

[LISTEN TO THE LATEST EPISODE](#)

OXVENTURES

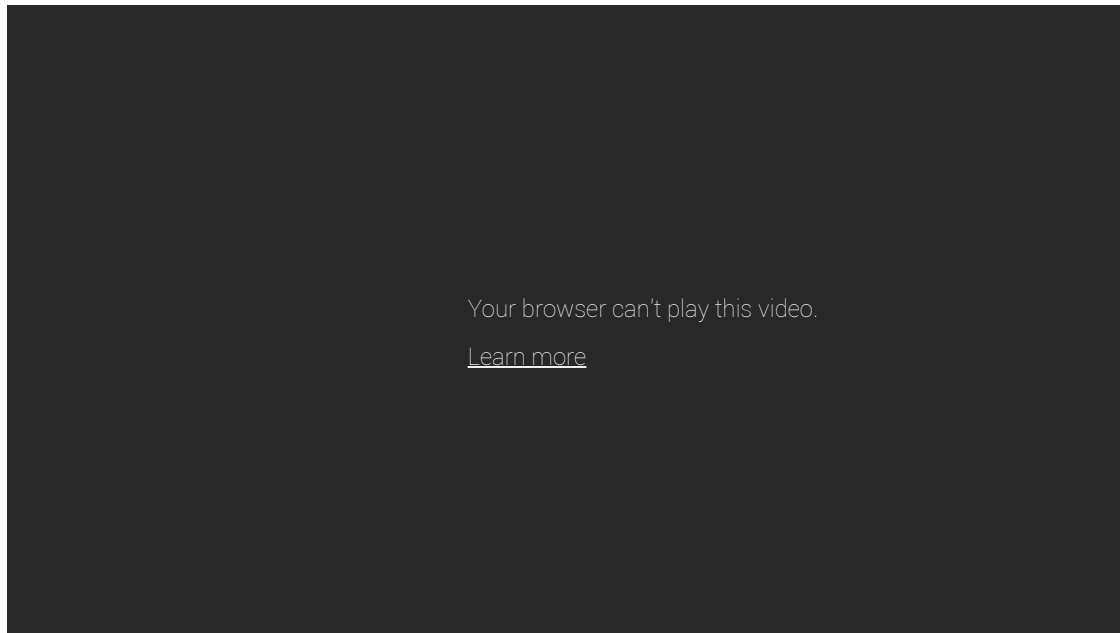
“We always had an interest in D&D and we’d been meaning to play it for a long time. Getting everyone together to make it happen was the low barrier. There was interest from the *Outside Xbox* audience and when we hit two million subscribers on YouTube we thought playing D&D would be a good way to celebrate,” remembers Jane Douglas, host, writer and editor for *Outside Xbox*.

“We started with a video game audience primarily but those people have made the transition with us. Every game of D&D we’ve ever played is on video so you can see our learning curve and that helps break down the idea that it’s a difficult game to get into.”

Currently Streaming: *Oxventure fortnightly D&D session* 4pm BST (8am PST, 11am EST) every other Friday

The Full Monty: *Every Oxventure D&D video*

Recent Jumping-Off Point: *Oxventure: Exhibition Impossible*



QUESTING TIME

Improv comedian Paul Foxcroft turned an existing residency “in a lovely space at the Phoenix in Central London” into a monthly live D&D game. “We did a couple of hour-and-a-half D&D sessions doing one-shots and I suddenly realized I didn’t need to book a warm-up act and we could play for longer and feel less constrained. Once we started doing two-and-a-half hours every month, we switched to a continuous narrative that lasted from September 2017 to August 2018,” he recalls.

Typically filling his party with expert improv actors and comedians (his current stream features Richard Soames, Briony Redman, Matt Highton and Rufus Hound), the tone is as fun as you’d expect. An excellent example of that comes from his 2019 Edinburgh Fringe show.

“The recurring theme was that all the characters worked for a quest giver called Baron Francula, which was me doing a Matt Berry impression. He was a Frankenstein’s monster who had been bitten by a Dracula. The villain was Count Drakenstein, who was a Frankenstein’s monster made of Draculas. We had a lot of silly fun with that.”

Currently Streaming: *Questing Time* 7pm BST (11am PST, 2pm

EST) on Saturdays at [Twitch.tv/dnd](https://www.twitch.tv/dnd) and [Twitch.tv/questingtime](https://www.twitch.tv/questingtime)

The Full Monty: Watch *Questing Time* [from the beginning](#)

[WATCH THE LATEST EPISODE](#)

SNAP, CRACKLE AND POP CULTURE

The Swansea-based podcast began life as a group of friends talking about comics, TV shows and anything that caught their interest. All four of the regular cast (Leanne Camilleri, Alan Jakubus-Hughes, Ralph Lim, and DM Josh Somerville-Jacklin) play Dungeons & Dragons outside of the podcast and it seemed too good an opportunity not to play together and record the results.

“Josh pitched the idea of doing a quirky one-shot—although it never is a one-shot, it always leads to multiple sessions. It grew into something else and we thought it would be cool to try and include that in the podcast,” says Ralph Lim. “Once you have a vested interest in the storyline, no matter how simple the development is, it captures you. And with the roll of the dice, especially in combat, you don’t know what’s going to happen. Some of the storytelling tropes might be there but often you can flip them to be completely different and create something you wouldn’t be able to encounter on TV or in the movies.”

“Alan’s mum is always asking when the next D&D episode is. She really enjoys them, which is lovely to hear,” says Somerville-Jacklin.

Currently Streaming: [Episode 62: D&D Night \(Part 7\)](#)

The Full Monty: [Snap, Crackle and Pop Culture on RadioPublic](#)

Recent Jumping-Off Point: [Episode 37: D&D Night \(Part 1\)](#)

[LISTEN TO THE LATEST EPISODE](#)

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ACCESSIBILITY & D&D

Chloe Mashiter highlights the charities, streamers, and advocates helping to build better awareness around accessibility in the D&D community.



DISCLAIMER: During these times of social distancing, we've been promoting available resources and advice for playing D&D safely and remotely. You can find out more at [this link](#). The following article discusses options that include in-person play, in the context of further accessibility within the D&D

Community. We encourage everyone to continue practicing safe measures when keeping the following advice in mind.

Every D&D table has its own personality. Whether it's a coffee table overflowing with maps, minis and notes, a co-opted dining table piled high with drinks and snacks for the long haul, or a custom-made gaming table with built-in dice trays, they are reflections of the people playing.

It's easy to think of accessibility as an extra step that's taken to accommodate disabled, neurodivergent, or chronically ill players, yet it's already embedded into most games for the players at the table. As important as the cards a cleric uses to keep track of prepared spells or the digital character sheet a player prefers to the printed one, is the armchair the DM knows will be the only seat still comfortable after four hours of playing. The real step is being aware of the different needs those at the table might have.



MAXIMUM INCLUSION

Rupert Greyling says it's striking how many tools (from specialist character sheets and high-contrast dice to physical tokens) are

already easily available for a gaming table. Greyling runs Maximum Inclusion events under the banner of **The Goblin's Chest**, where people (often children) with specific needs can play tabletop roleplaying games. These events are designed to be inclusive of those who frequently encounter barriers to playing, drawing upon a wealth of resources to cater for players with many different potential needs—from Downs Syndrome to visual impairments.



Rupert Greyling

“We use a single character sheet that covers as many needs as possible. The **initial sheet** was created by Inuyasharuls and Axelle123 on **Reddit** for dyslexic gamers but has been edited by myself to include colors more suitable for people that are colorblind, as well as larger colored elements that children with learning difficulties can recognize. Ultimately, it’s a normal character sheet but is friendlier and more fun to look at,” he explains.

(Select to view)

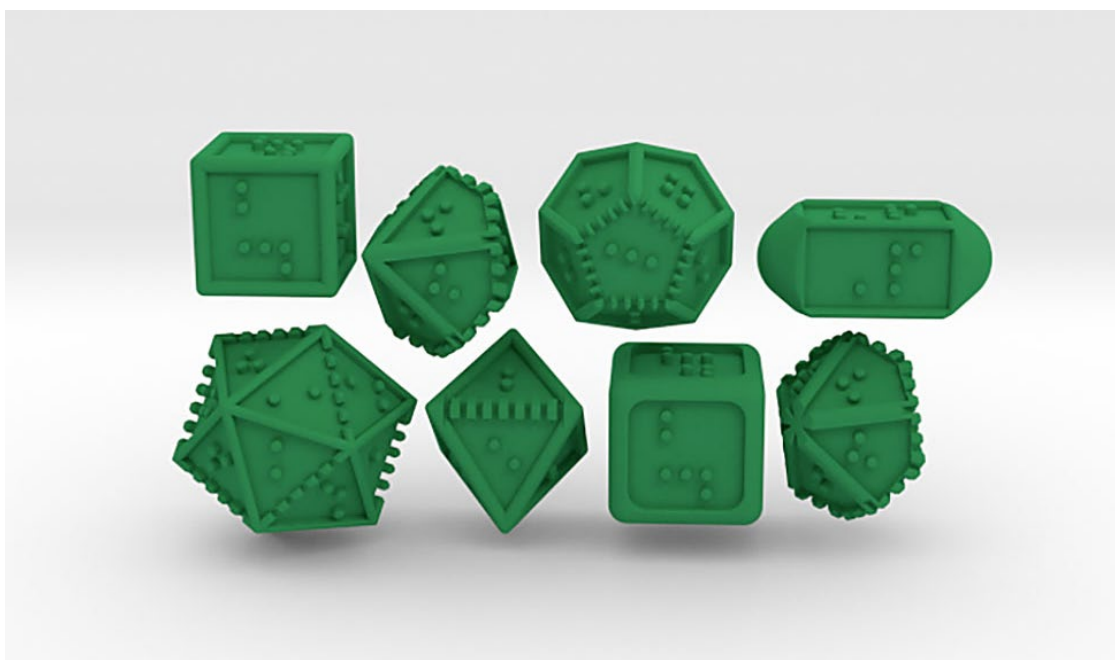
“We also use big, high-contrast foam dice to aid visually impaired children. And we have a bucket of dice at each table as that kind of tactile play helps a lot of kids to focus and not stress out, especially those with ASD on the autistic spectrum.”

Greyling also offers braille character sheets for players, going the extra mile by using a braille frame to write tactile messages during games. Like many drawn to D&D, he’s no stranger to using improvisation and adaptation and

those skills have helped him find solutions for keeping track of other changing elements within the game.

“Because of the tactile nature of the braille character sheets, you can’t simply erase something and write in a new value. However, it is possible to use braille percentile dice to track money and health points. You can also use tactile tokens for things like ki points, rage, or bardic inspiration,” he says.

DOTS RPG PROJECT

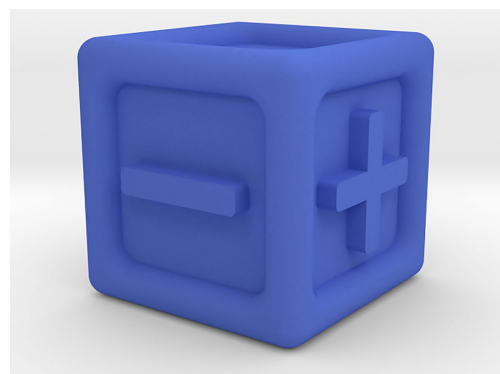


One of the more specialist accessories Greyling uses at the Maximum Inclusion events are distinctive braille dice. These are produced by the **DOTS RPG Project**, a nonprofit organization founded with the aim of improving accessibility in gaming. While DOTS initially provided tools and materials for blind and visually impaired players, director Jess Dempsey quickly expanded its reach to help remove barriers for gamers no matter the disability. The organization has grown rapidly in two years, already making a positive impact in the D&D community.

“We immediately had people with other disabilities reaching out and requesting help. It became obvious that this part of society needed a spotlight pointed in its direction,” Dempsey remembers. “A d20 may

be nothing special to most players but it can open up a whole new world for someone else when they're able to roll it for the first time. We get stories of 50-plus-year-old gamers who are getting the chance to roll and read their own dice for the first time in their lives. We also have younger children who are growing up blind or with low vision and are finding a brand-new level of joy in being able to play TTRPGs and roll dice alongside their friends."

Tyler Palermo, Dempsey's colleague in DOTS, understands the empowerment of being able to participate as a member of the roleplaying community. Having had to carve out their own way as a blind D&D player, they understand the agency of being able to create characters and worlds and star as the hero of their own story.



"I look back and see the change from a place of hopelessness, thinking TTRPGS would be yet another avenue of entertainment I will never be able to enjoy. I applied every technique and work-around I could think of to make it technically possible for me to participate at the table," Palermo remembers. "Now I'm fully part of this community, playing and running games every week. I'm proud to be part of an exciting initiative to make sure nobody is left out of gaming and storytelling."

HEROES WITHOUT LIMITS

The availability of inclusive tools and materials is only one weapon in the battle for accessibility. In order to be assured that a hobby is open to them, a community needs to see itself visibly represented within it. Online streams are therefore a powerful forum for demonstrating that D&D can genuinely be for everyone.

"I'm happy to recommend *Heroes Without Limits* because it doesn't stop at accessibility and inclusion, it truly celebrates the value of disabled gamers and how important it is to have disabled characters represented in all of our stories. Their streams are good games in

their own right but folks can also learn a lot by watching them,” Palermo suggests.



Founded by [Sara Thompson](#), *Heroes Without Limits* is a community of disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent gamers and allies. Its first stream aired almost two years ago and featured Thompson, [Samwise Gamegee](#), [Ethnic Darito](#), Paladin Butch and [Alzzarla](#) and it quickly grew into the multiple streams which now run on the channel, co-produced by Thompson, Gamegee, and [Giftnova Gaming](#).

Streams such as *Heroes Without Limits* and *Knights of the Braille* (the latter made up of blind and visually impaired players) strive to make their content accessible in as many ways as possible and are therefore a great place for Dungeon Masters and players to find new tools.

“Go and find disabled streamers and support their games, because your view counts,” says Thompson. “It’s the small things that really do mean a lot. You might not think to have live web captions when you start streaming—we now use a [live captioner](#) thanks to a tutorial made by [Torn Pixie](#) that allows us to apply it to our shows. We place those subtitles below our faces so anyone who lipreads can still see our faces. That kind of thing is very important, and should be a set norm.”

OPEN TABLE

Thompson also operates an ‘open table’ rule during games, allowing players who require it to get up at any time, no questions asked. This is to avoid the need for anyone to raise personal accessibility needs, especially when playing with abled people, so no one is forced to explain their disability to others.

“There’s a problem feeling like you can’t bring things up,” Thompson says from experience, as Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos syndrome can make it painful for her to sit for long periods of time and may require medication that results in “brain fog, where you can’t concentrate on what a DM is saying to you, even though they’ve said it five times to your face. I would always feel pretty terrible asking every hour and a half, ‘Hey, can we take a break?’ while everyone else was really getting into playing.”



Sara Thompson

Although asking someone at the table about their experiences may seem taboo for an abled DM or player, Greyling says his professional experience has taught him to be as transparent about his ignorance as possible.

“Don’t assume that you know what people are going through. You’re not going to know everything, so ask questions about it. But if you are going to ask a question, think very carefully about what you’re asking and explain why you’re enquiring. Ask if they mind talking about their life experience in order for you to be more inclusive.”

Bear in mind that many people are willing to discuss their disabilities, illnesses, or neurodiversity to help spread understanding but it’s still important to respect their boundaries and not push them for more than they’re comfortable sharing.

“One size will never fit all,” adds Palermo, who says it’s easy to overlook the fact that the same disability will affect different people in different ways, and may affect the same person differently from

day-to-day. “Honest, deliberate conversation is the best option. Be straightforward and ask how those involved can work together to make sure everyone at the table is having a good experience.”



CHARACTER

CONSIDERATIONS

Creating accessible games goes beyond learning people’s needs and introducing new tools and rules to your table, it’s also about representing those characters in the world you play in. Playing a disabled character might seem like a daunting task for an abled player who doesn’t want to cause offence or further stereotypes. Yet Thompson says not including disabled people in a world is the same as saying that they don’t exist. Fortunately, there are a lot of resources to help players prepare for such roles.

Various conditions (such as the group of connective tissue disorders that make up the **Ehlers-Danlos syndromes**) have websites dedicated to demystifying them; advocates on Twitter (such as **Blind Temple**) readily offer information about their experiences; resources such as the **Heroes Without Limits discord** include areas where you can ask for advice and information; YouTube channels such as **Power Up Gamers** feature accessibility panels and more; and other amazing projects include the work that is being carried out to create a sign

language vocabulary for Dungeons & Dragons—both in American Sign Language via **ASL for RPG** and in British Sign Language with **Somatic Component**.

“In Dungeons & Dragons I have power over my own representation and I am able to create people like myself and others to give these worlds the representation they need,” says Thompson, pointing us towards a homebrew that deals with how the mechanics of **combat wheelchairs** might work in game.

All of these resources provide opportunities to learn about disabilities and feature them in-world from a place of understanding, avoiding common misconceptions such as applying negatives and minuses to stats and abilities. Much as with people in real life, D&D characters would develop necessary workarounds or different ways of doing things to live their lives.



ESTABLISHING A NEW NORM

While this might seem like a lot to consider, there's no reason to be daunted by the extra thought that goes into making games representative and inclusive. Most games already have more

awareness built in than you might first realize. Whether you're a DM who knows not to mention spiders because of a player's arachnophobia or a player who avoids character on character PvP attacks because a fellow player doesn't enjoy them, gamers often unconsciously show the flexibility and responsiveness that is the core of accessibility. Once people have built up an understanding of the tools, materials, and needs of the group, Greyling says it's simply a matter of "being willing to amend and being dynamic enough in your approach to things."

Given the descriptive nature of D&D, both Thompson and Greyling also suggest adapting language as an immediate way to make games more accessible. "Try to describe things in five senses. Even if someone's playing a blind character they can hear and experience the world that way," says Thompson. Greyling says DMs for Maximum Inclusion events are always prepped to use "a simple but informative style of delivery, keeping things relatable, and understandable to all the players regardless of their personal challenges." DMs should also be aware of ableist language that might otherwise become normalized within the game, using resources such as [this guide](#) as a useful starting point.

Greyling also suggests DMs consider keeping group sizes small. He caps tables at four players during Maximum Inclusion events to ensure an individual child's needs get the attention and assistance they require. Having tables spaced far enough apart to allow those with mobility aids to navigate the space is another easy to achieve step.

"Whenever I've run games, I have the traditional handouts with all the fancy lettering on and then an easy-to-read version," says Thompson of another simple step that can improve the accessibility of games.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

One of the benefits of a roleplaying game is that the ability to adapt to different people's needs is already built into its format. A central driver of Dungeons & Dragons is that everyone at the table have fun.

All that's needed is the compassion and willingness to spread that same belief throughout the wider D&D community.

“D&D is a phenomenal jungle gym for people to build their own adventures on, not a ladder with only one way up and down,” says Greyling. “The nuts and bolts are there. But that's the thing about nuts and bolts, they can be tightened, loosened and dismantled as much as you like. DMs bend the laws of space and time to create an experience that the people at the table enjoy, adjusting the specifics of a situation dynamically, based on the players at their tables.”

BACK TO TOP

Unearthed Arcana: Spells, Magical Tattoos, and Psionics

Sharing new playtest possibilities for the bard, druid, cleric, fighter, paladin, ranger, rogue, sorcerer, warlock, and wizard.

By Jeremy Crawford, Dan Dillon, Ben Petrisor, with Bill Benham, Adam Lee, Taymoor Rehman, and F. Wesley Schneider



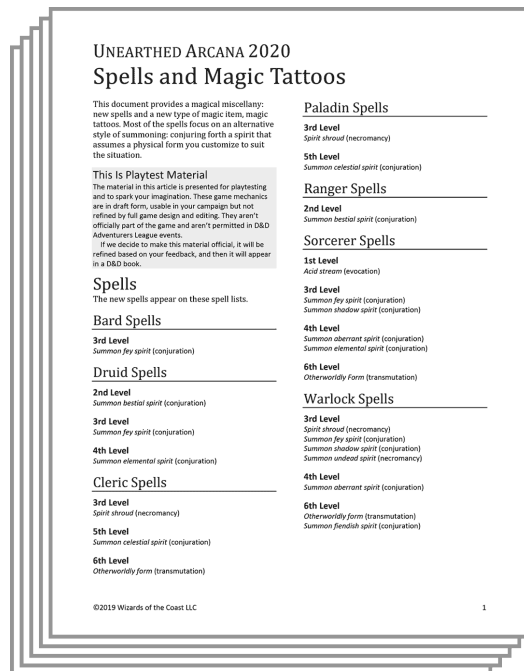
Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game development and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Following a bumper edition in our previous issue, *Unearthed Arcana* continues to provide plenty of food for thought as 2020 continues. Recent fifth edition playtest options include additional spells for multiple casters, tattoos with the ability to generate wondrous effects and abilities, and a further revision of psionic abilities.

Spells and Magic Tattoos



Boost the magic in your D&D games with the addition of new spells for the bard, druid, cleric, paladin, ranger, sorcerer, warlock, and wizard. Many of the spells focus on an alternative style of summoning, allowing the caster to bring forth a spirit that assumes a physical form which can be customized to suit the situation.

However, the sorcerer and wizard also gain the powerful new 1st-level spell *acid stream*, which fires a five-foot wide and thirty-foot long burst of acid. Creatures

failing their Dexterity saving throw take 3d4 acid damage, which repeats at the start of each of their turns for the spell's duration until an action is used to scrape or wash the acid off.

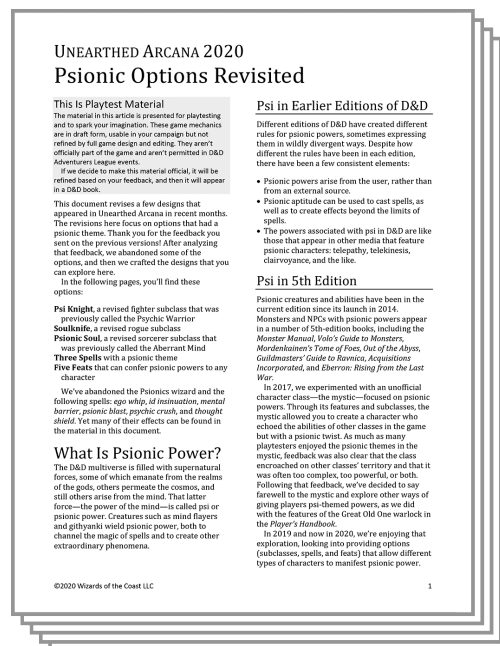
The cleric, warlock, and wizard also gain the new 6th-level spell *otherworldly form*. Drawing on the magic of the planes, they transform themselves to be immune to fire damage, poison damage, and the poisoned condition (Lower Planes) or radiant damage, necrotic damage and the charmed condition (Upper Planes). Spectral wings also give them a flying speed of 40 feet, they gain a +2 bonus to AC and their weapon attacks are magical and use their spellcasting ability modifier for attack and damage rolls. They can also attack twice when they take the Attack action as long as they don't already have that ability.

The second part of this magical miscellany concerns a new type of item: magic tattoos. Blending magic and artistry with ink and needles, magic tattoos imbue their bearers with wondrous effects and abilities. The designs of magic tattoos vary greatly in appearance depending on who created them, but they share general characteristics that hint at the effect that will be created.

Magic tattoos are initially bound to magic needles, which transfer their magic to a creature. Once inscribed on a creature's skin, damage or injury doesn't impair the tattoo's function, even if the tattoo is defaced. The rarer a magic tattoo is, the more space it occupies. A tattoo with a common effect might take up only six inches of a creature's skin, while a legendary magical tattoo might cover the torso and two limbs.

Psionic Options Revisited

Psi is a supernatural power that emanates from the mind. Psionic creatures and abilities have been in the current edition of D&D since its launch in 2014. Monsters and NPCs with psionic powers appear in a number of 5th-edition books, including the *Monster Manual*, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, *Out of the Abyss*, *Guildmasters' Guide to Ravenna*, *Acquisitions Incorporated*, and *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.



These latest revisions for psionics update several psi-themed options and include a new collection of spells, subclasses, and feats. That includes three new spells for bard, sorcerer, warlock, and wizard with a psionic theme. Meanwhile, the new subclasses include:

- **Psi Knight** (previously the Psychic Warrior): This revised fighter subclass augments physical might with psi-infused weapon strikes, telekinetic lashes, and barriers of mental force.

- Soulknife (previously the Aberrant Mind): This revised rogue subclass strikes and infiltrates with the mind, cutting through barriers both physical and psychic.
- Psionic Soul: This revised sorcerer subclass can touch other minds and alter the world around it by controlling the magical energy of the multiverse.

The new playtest options also include five feats that can confer psionic powers to any character. These include: Metabolic Control (refined psionic control over your

body's functions); Telekinetic (learning to move things with your mind); Telepathic (awakening the ability to mentally connect with others); Tower of Iron Will (your mind's defenses are formidable), and Wild Talent (awakening your psionic potential enhances your mind or body).

Access the new playtest options for spells and magical tattoos by downloading the PDF.

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF NOW](#)

Access the new psionic playtest options by downloading the PDF.

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF NOW](#)

To see the full treasure trove of Unearthed Arcana articles, covering new classes and feats, conversions of rules from previous editions, and much more, [visit the archive](#).

BACK TO TOP

UNEARTHED ARCANA 2020

Spells and Magic Tattoos

This document provides a magical miscellany: new spells and a new type of magic item, magic tattoos. Most of the spells focus on an alternative style of summoning: conjuring forth a spirit that assumes a physical form you customize to suit the situation.

This Is Playtest Material

The material in this article is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by full game design and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

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Spells

The new spells appear on these spell lists.

Bard Spells

3rd Level

Summon fey spirit (conjunction)

Druid Spells

2nd Level

Summon bestial spirit (conjunction)

3rd Level

Summon fey spirit (conjunction)

4th Level

Summon elemental spirit (conjunction)

Cleric Spells

3rd Level

Spirit shroud (necromancy)

5th Level

Summon celestial spirit (conjunction)

6th Level

Otherworldly form (transmutation)

Paladin Spells

3rd Level

Spirit shroud (necromancy)

5th Level

Summon celestial spirit (conjunction)

Ranger Spells

2nd Level

Summon bestial spirit (conjunction)

Sorcerer Spells

1st Level

Acid stream (evocation)

3rd Level

Summon fey spirit (conjunction)

Summon shadow spirit (conjunction)

4th Level

Summon aberrant spirit (conjunction)

Summon elemental spirit (conjunction)

6th Level

Otherworldly Form (transmutation)

Warlock Spells

3rd Level

Spirit shroud (necromancy)

Summon fey spirit (conjunction)

Summon shadow spirit (conjunction)

Summon undead spirit (necromancy)

4th Level

Summon aberrant spirit (conjunction)

6th Level

Otherworldly form (transmutation)

Summon fiendish spirit (conjunction)

Wizard Spells

1st Level

Acid stream (evocation)

3rd Level

Spirit shroud (necromancy)

Summon fey spirit (conjuration)

Summon shadow spirit (conjuration)

Summon undead spirit (necromancy)

4th Level

Summon aberrant spirit (conjuration)

Summon elemental spirit (conjuration)

6th Level

Otherworldly form (transmutation)

Summon fiendish spirit (conjuration)

Spell Descriptions

The spells are presented in alphabetical order.

Acid Stream

1st-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (30-foot line)

Components: V, S, M (a bit of rotten food)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

A stream of acid emanates from you in a line 30 feet long and 5 feet wide in a direction you choose. Each creature in the line must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or be covered in acid for the spell's duration or until a creature uses its action to scrape or wash the acid off itself or another creature. A creature covered in the acid takes 3d4 acid damage at start of each of its turns.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d4 for each slot level above 1st.

Otherworldly Form

6th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (an object engraved with a symbol of the Outer Planes, worth at least 500 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Uttering an incantation, you draw on the magic of the Lower Planes or Upper Planes (your choice) to transform yourself. You gain the following benefits until the spell ends:

- You are immune to fire and poison damage (Lower Planes) or radiant and necrotic damage (Upper Planes).
- You are immune to the poisoned condition (Lower Planes) or the charmed condition (Upper Planes).
- Spectral wings appear on your back, giving you a flying speed of 40 feet.
- You have a +2 bonus to AC.
- All your weapon attacks are magical, and when you make a weapon attack, you can use your spellcasting ability modifier, instead of Strength or Dexterity, for the attack and damage rolls.
- You can attack twice, instead of once, when you take the Attack action on your turn. You ignore this benefit if you already have a feature, like Extra Attack, that gives you extra attacks.

Spirit Shroud

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You call forth spirits of the dead, which flit around you for the spell's duration. The spirits are intangible and invulnerable, and they are good or evil (your choice).

Until the spell ends, any attack you make deals 1d8 extra damage when you hit a creature within 10 feet of you. This damage is radiant if the spirits are good and necrotic if they are evil. Any creature that takes this damage can't regain hit points until the start of your next turn.

In addition, any creature of your choice that you can see that starts its turn within 10 feet of you has its speed reduced by 10 feet until the start of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 3rd.

Summon Aberrant Spirit

4th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a pickled tentacle and an eyeball in a crystal vial worth at least 400 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a spirit from the Far Realm or another alien realm of madness. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Aberrant Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose Beholderkin, Slaadi, or Star Spawn. The creature physically resembles your choice, which also determines some of the traits in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

ABERRANT SPIRIT

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the aberration's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (Beholderkin only; hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	6 (–2)

Damage Immunities psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Deep Speech, understands the languages you speak

Regeneration (Slaadi Only). The aberration regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Whispering Aura (Star Spawn Only). At the start of each of the aberration's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your

spell save DC or take 3d6 psychic damage, provided that the aberration isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The aberration makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Eye Ray (Beholderkin Only). Ranged Spell Attack: +3 + the spell's level to hit, range 30 ft., one creature. Hit: 1d8 + 3 + the spell's level psychic damage.

Claws (Slaadi Only). Melee Weapon Attack: +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d10 + 3 + the spell's level slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it can't regain hit points until the start of the aberration's next turn.

Psychic Slam (Star Spawn Only). Melee Spell Attack: +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 1d6 + 3 + the spell's level psychic damage.

Summon Bestial Spirit

2nd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a feather, tuft of fur, and fish tail inside a gilded acorn worth at least 200 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth the spirit of a beast. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Bestial Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose an environment: Air, Land, or Water. The creature physically resembles an animal of your choice that is native to the chosen environment, which also determines one of the movement modes in the creature's stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

BESTIAL SPIRIT

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the beast's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft. (Land only), fly 60 ft. (Air only), swim 30 ft. (Water only)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	4 (−4)	14 (+2)	5 (−3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands the languages you speak

Amphibious (Water Only). The beast can breathe air and water.

Flyby (Air Only). The beast doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Pack Tactics (Land and Water Only). The beast has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the beast's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The beast makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Maul. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8 + 4 + the spell's level piercing damage.

Summon Celestial Spirit

5th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a golden reliquary worth at least 500 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a spirit from the Upper Planes. The spirit manifests physically in an angelic form in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Celestial Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose Avenger or Defender. Your choice determines the creature's attack in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action

required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

CELESTIAL SPIRIT

Large celestial, neutral good

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the celestial's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Damage Resistances radiant

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Celestial, understands the languages you speak

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The celestial makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Radiant Bow (Avenger Only). Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 + the spell's level to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6 + 2 + the spell's level radiant damage.

Radiant Mace (Defender Only). Melee Weapon Attack: +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10 + 3 + the spell's level radiant damage, and the celestial can choose itself or another creature it can see within 10 feet of the target. The chosen creature gains temporary hit points equal to the damage dealt, provided it doesn't already have temporary hit points.

Healing Touch (1/Day). The celestial touches another creature. The target magically regains hit points equal to 2d8 + the spell's level.

Summon Elemental Spirit

4th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (air, a pebble, ash, and water inside a crystal vial worth at least 400 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a spirit from the Elemental Planes. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This

corporeal form uses the Elemental Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose an element: Air, Earth, Fire, or Water. The creature physically resembles a vaguely humanoid form wreathed in the chosen element, which also determines some of the traits in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

ELEMENTAL SPIRIT

Medium elemental, neutral

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the elemental's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft. (Air only, hover), burrow 40 ft. (Earth only), swim 40 ft. (Water only)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	4 (−4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Damage Resistances lightning, thunder (Air only); piercing, slashing (Earth only); acid (Water only)

Damage Immunities poison; fire (Fire only)

Condition Immunities exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Primordial, understands the languages you speak

Amorphous Form (Air, Fire, and Water Only). The elemental can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d10 + 4 + the spell's level bludgeoning damage (Air, Earth, and Water only) or fire damage (Fire only).

Summon Fey Spirit

3rd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a gilded flower worth at least 300 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a spirit from the Feywild. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Fey Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose a mood: Deceitful, Furious, or Joyful. The creature physically resembles a satyr, a dryad, or an elf (your choice) marked by the chosen mood, which also determines one of the traits in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

FEY SPIRIT

Small fey, chaotic good

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the fey's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Sylvan, understands the languages you speak

Fey Step. As a bonus action, the fey can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Darkening Step (Deceitful Only). Immediately after using its Fey Step, the fey can fill a 5-foot cube within 5 feet of it with magical darkness, which remains until the end of the fey's next turn.

Ecstatic Step (Joyful Only). Immediately after using its Fey Step, the fey can choose a creature it can see within 10 feet of it and force it to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or be charmed by the fey for 1 minute. The charm ends if the fey or any of its companions deals any damage to the target.

Impassioned Step (Furious Only). Immediately after using its Fey Step, the fey has advantage on the next attack roll it makes before the end of its turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fey makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6 + 3 + the spell's level piercing damage + 1d6 force damage.

Summon Fiendish Spirit

6th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (humanoid blood inside a ruby vial worth at least 600 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a fiendish spirit from the Lower Planes. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Fiendish Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose Demon, Devil, or Yugoloth. The creature physically resembles a fiend of the chosen type, which also determines some of the traits in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

FIENDISH SPIRIT

Large fiend, chaotic evil (Demon only), lawful evil (Devil only), or neutral evil (Yugoloth only)

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the fiend's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft. (Demon only), fly 60 ft. (Devil only)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Damage Resistances fire

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Abyssal, Infernal, telepathy 60 ft.

Magic Resistance. The fiend has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Death Throes (Demon Only). When the fiend drops to 0 hit points or the spell ends, the fiend explodes, and each creature within 10 feet of it must make a Dexterity saving throw against your spell save DC. A creature takes 2d10 + this spell's level fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Devil's Sight (Devil Only). Magical darkness doesn't impede the fiend's darkvision.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fiend makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Bite (Demon Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d12 + 3 + the spell's level necrotic damage.

Claws (Yugoloth Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 + the spell's level slashing damage. Immediately after the attack hits or misses, the fiend can magically teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Hurl Flame (Devil Only). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, range 150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d6 + 3 + the spell's level fire damage. If the target is a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried, it also catches fire.

Summon Shadow Spirit

3rd-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (tears inside a crystal vial worth at least 300 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a shadowy spirit from the Shadowfell. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Shadow Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose an emotion: Fury, Despair, or Fear. The creature physically resembles a misshapen humanoid marked by the chosen emotion, which also determines some of the traits in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

SHADOW SPIRIT

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the shadow's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	4 (−4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Damage Resistances necrotic

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, understands the languages you speak

Bloodthirsty Frenzy (Fury Only). The spirit has advantage on attack rolls against frightened creatures.

Shadow Stealth (Fear Only). While in dim light or darkness, the spirit can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Weight of Ages (Despair Only). Any beast or humanoid, other than you, that starts its turn within 5 feet of the spirit has its speed reduced by 20 feet until the start of that beast or humanoid's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spirit makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Chilling Rend. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 2d8 + 3 + the spell's level cold damage.

Dreadful Scream (1/Day). The spirit screams. Each creature within 30 feet of it must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or be frightened of the spirit for 1 minute. The frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Summon Undead Spirit

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V, S, M (a gilded humanoid skull worth at least 300 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You call forth a restless spirit from beyond the grave. The spirit manifests physically in an unoccupied space that you can see within range. This corporeal form uses the Undead Spirit stat block below. When you cast the spell, choose the creature's form: Ghostly, Putrid, or Skeletal. The creature physically resembles a humanoid with the chosen form, which also determines some of the traits in its stat block. The creature disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions for the spell's duration. In combat, the creature shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It obeys verbal commands that you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't issue any, it defends itself but otherwise takes no action.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, the creature assumes the higher level for that casting wherever it uses the spell's level in its stat block.

UNDEAD SPIRIT

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 11 + the level of the spell (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the undead's Constitution modifier + your spellcasting ability modifier + ten times the spell's level

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (Ghostly only; hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	4 (-4)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, understands the languages you speak

Incorporeal Movement (Ghostly Only). The undead can become incorporeal while moving and pass through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. If it ends its turn inside an object, it is shunted to the nearest unoccupied space and takes 1d10 force damage for every 5 feet traveled.

Festering Aura (Putrid Only). Any creature, other than you, that starts its turn within 5 feet of the undead must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC or be poisoned until the start of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spirit makes a number of attacks equal to half this spell's level (rounded down).

Deathly Touch (Ghostly Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 + the spell's level necrotic damage, and the creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or be frightened of the undead until the end of the target's next turn.

Grave Bolt (Skeletal Only). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, range 150 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2d8 + 3 + the spell's level necrotic damage.

Rotting Claw (Putrid Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + the spell's level to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6 + 3 + the spell's level slashing damage. If the target is poisoned, it must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC or be paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

Magic Tattoos

Blending magic and artistry with ink and needles, magic tattoos imbue their bearers with wondrous effects and abilities. Magic tattoos are initially bound to magic needles, which transfer their magic to a creature. The designs of magic tattoos vary greatly in appearance depending on who created it, but they share general characteristics that hint at the effect of the tattoo.

Once inscribed on a creature's skin, damage or injury doesn't impair the tattoo's function, even if the tattoo is defaced.

The rarer a magic tattoo is, the more space it occupies on a creature's skin. The Magic Tattoo Coverage table offers guidelines for how large a given tattoo is.

Magic Tattoo Coverage

Tattoo Rarity	Area Covered
Common	Up to 6 inches
Uncommon	Half a limb or the scalp
Rare	One limb
Very Rare	Two limbs or the chest or upper back
Legendary	Two limbs and the torso

Variant: Body Modification

These items needn't be limited to just tattoos. They can instead be presented as other body modifications such as brands, scarification, birthmarks, patterns of scales, or any other cosmetic skin adornment or alteration. Consider the object a magical body modification is bound to instead of tattoo needles, such as branding irons or enchanted dragon scales.

Tattoo Descriptions

The magic tattoos are presented in alphabetical order. They follow the rules for magic items, as presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Absorbing Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), very rare (requires attunement)

This tattoo incorporates designs that emphasize one color more than others. While the tattoo is on your skin, you have resistance to a type of damage associated with that color, as shown on the table below. The DM chooses the color or determines it randomly.

d10	Damage Type	Color
1	Acid	Green
2	Cold	Blue
3	Fire	Red
4	Force	White
5	Lightning	Yellow
6	Necrotic	Black
7	Poison	Violet
8	Psychic	Silver
9	Radiant	Gold
10	Thunder	Orange

Damage Absorption. When you take damage of the chosen type, you can use your reaction to gain immunity against that instance of the damage, and you regain a number of hit points equal to half the damage you would have taken. Once this reaction is used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Barrier Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), rarity varies (requires attunement)

This tattoo depicts protective imagery and uses ink that resembles liquid metal. While you aren't wearing armor, the tattoo grants you an Armor Class depending on the tattoo's rarity, as shown below. You can use a shield and still gain this benefit.

Rarity	AC
Uncommon	12 + your Dexterity modifier
Rare	15 + your Dexterity modifier (maximum of +2)
Very Rare	18

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears

on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Rule Tip: AC Calculations Don't Stack

When the game gives you more than one way to calculate your Armor Class, you can use only one of them. You choose the one to use.

Coiling Grasp Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), uncommon (requires attunement)

This tattoo has long intertwining designs. While the tattoo is on your skin, you can, as an action, cause the tattoo to extrude into inky tendrils, which reach for a creature you can see within 15 feet of you. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or take 3d6 force damage and be grappled by you. As an action, the creature can escape the grapple by succeeding on a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The grapple also ends if you halt it (no action required), if the creature is ever more than 15 feet away from you, or if you use this tattoo on a different creature.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Eldritch Claw Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), uncommon (requires attunement)

This tattoo depicts clawlike forms and other jagged shapes. While the tattoo is on your skin, your unarmed strikes are considered magical for the purpose of overcoming immunity and resistance to nonmagical attacks, and you gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls with unarmed strikes.

Eldritch Maul. As a bonus action, you can empower the tattoo for 1 minute. For the duration, each of your melee weapon attacks can reach a target up to 30 feet away from you, as tendrils of ink launch from your weapon or unarmed strike toward the target. In addition, your melee weapon attacks deal an extra 1d6 force damage on a hit. Once used, this bonus action can't be used again until the next dawn.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Blood Fury Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), legendary (requires attunement)

This tattoo evokes fury in its form and colors. While this tattoo is on your skin, you gain the following benefits:

- Your attack rolls score a critical hit on a d20 roll of 19 or 20.
- When you score a critical hit against a creature, that target takes an extra 4d6 necrotic damage, and you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.
- When a creature you can see damages you, you can use your reaction to make a melee attack against that creature, with advantage on your attack roll.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Rule Tip: Temporary Hit Points Don't Stack

If you have temporary hit points and receive more of them, you don't add them together, unless a rule says you can. Instead, you decide which temporary hit points to keep. For more information on temporary hit points, see chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Illuminator's Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), common (requires attunement)

This tattoo contains beautiful calligraphy, images of writing implements, and the like. While this tattoo is on your skin, you can write with your fingertip as if it were an ink pen that never runs out of ink.

As an action, you can touch a piece of writing up to one page in length and speak a creature's name. The writing becomes invisible to everyone other than you and the named creature for the next 24 hours. Either of you can dismiss the invisibility by touching the script (no action required). Once used, this action can't be used again until the next dawn.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Lifewell Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), rare (requires attunement)

This tattoo comprises symbols of life and rebirth. While this tattoo is on your skin, you have resistance to necrotic damage.

Death Ward. When you would be reduced to 0 hit points, you drop to 1 hit point instead. Once used, this benefit can't be used again until the next dawn.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into

the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Ghost Step Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), rare (requires attunement)

This tattoo shifts and wavers on the skin, parts of it appearing blurred. The tattoo has 3 charges, and it regains all expended charges daily at dawn.

As a bonus action while the tattoo is on your skin, you can expend 1 of the tattoo's charges to become incorporeal until the end of your next turn. For the duration, you gain the following benefits:

- You have resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks.
- You can't be grappled or restrained.
- You can move through creatures and solid objects as if they were difficult terrain. If you end your turn in a solid object, you take 1d10 force damage. If the effect ends while you are inside a solid object, you instead are shunted to the nearest unoccupied space, and you take 1d10 force damage for every 5 feet traveled.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Masquerade Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), common (requires attunement)

This tattoo appears on your skin as whatever you desire. As a bonus action, you can shape the tattoo into any color or pattern and move it to any area of your skin. Whatever form it takes, it

is always obviously a tattoo. It can range in size from no smaller than a copper piece to an intricate work of art that covers all your skin.

Disguise Self. As an action, you can use the tattoo to cast the *disguise self* spell. Once the spell is cast from the tattoo, it can't be cast from the tattoo again until the next dawn.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

Spellwrought Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), rarity varies

This tattoo contains a single spell of up to 5th level, wrought on your skin by a magic needle. To use the tattoo, you must hold the needle against your skin where you want the tattoo to appear and speak the command word. The needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on your skin. Once the tattoo is on your skin, you can cast its spell, requiring no material components. The tattoo glows faintly while you cast the spell and for the spell's duration. Once the spell ends, the tattoo vanishes from your skin.

The level of the spell in the tattoo determines the spell's saving throw DC, attack bonus, spellcasting ability modifier, and the tattoo's rarity, as shown in the Spellwrought Tattoo table.

Spellwrought Tattoo

Spell Level	Rarity	Spellcasting		
		Ability Modifier	Save DC	Attack Bonus
Cantrip	Common	+3	13	+5
1st	Common	+3	13	+5
2nd	Uncommon	+3	13	+5
3rd	Uncommon	+4	15	+7
4th	Rare	+4	15	+7
5th	Rare	+5	17	+9

Shadowfell Brand Tattoo

Wondrous item (tattoo), very rare (requires attunement)

This tattoo is dark in color and abstract. While it's on your skin, you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Shadowy Defense. When you take damage, you can use your reaction to become shadowy and insubstantial for a moment, reducing the damage you take by half. Once used, this reaction can't be used again until the next dawn.

Tattoo Attunement. To attune to this item, you hold the needle to your skin where you want the tattoo to appear, pressing the needle there throughout the attunement process. When the attunement is complete, the needle turns into the ink that becomes the tattoo, which appears on the skin. If you have multiple magic tattoos, they count as a single magic item with regard to the number of magic items you can attune to.

If your attunement to the tattoo ends, the tattoo vanishes, and the needle reappears in the closest unoccupied space to you.

UNEARTHED ARCANA 2020

Psionic Options Revisited

This Is Playtest Material

The material in this article is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by full game design and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

This document revises a few designs that appeared in *Unearthed Arcana* in recent months. The revisions here focus on options that had a psionic theme. Thank you for the feedback you sent on the previous versions! After analyzing that feedback, we abandoned some of the options, and then we crafted the designs that you can explore here.

In the following pages, you'll find these options:

Psi Knight, a revised fighter subclass that was previously called the Psychic Warrior

Soulknife, a revised rogue subclass

Psionic Soul, a revised sorcerer subclass that was previously called the Aberrant Mind

Three Spells with a psionic theme

Five Feats that can confer psionic powers to any character

We've abandoned the Psionics wizard and the following spells: *ego whip*, *id insinuation*, *mental barrier*, *psionic blast*, *psychic crush*, and *thought shield*. Yet many of their effects can be found in the material in this document.

What Is Psionic Power?

The D&D multiverse is filled with supernatural forces, some of which emanate from the realms of the gods, others permeate the cosmos, and still others arise from the mind. That latter force—the power of the mind—is called psi or psionic power. Creatures such as mind flayers and githyanki wield psionic power, both to channel the magic of spells and to create other extraordinary phenomena.

Psi in Earlier Editions of D&D

Different editions of D&D have created different rules for psionic powers, sometimes expressing them in wildly divergent ways. Despite how different the rules have been in each edition, there have been a few consistent elements:

- Psionic powers arise from the user, rather than from an external source.
- Psionic aptitude can be used to cast spells, as well as to create effects beyond the limits of spells.
- The powers associated with psi in D&D are like those that appear in other media that feature psionic characters: telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance, and the like.

Psi in 5th Edition

Psionic creatures and abilities have been in the current edition since its launch in 2014.

Monsters and NPCs with psionic powers appear in a number of 5th-edition books, including the *Monster Manual*, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*, *Out of the Abyss*, *Guildmasters' Guide to Ravnica*, *Acquisitions Incorporated*, and *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*.

In 2017, we experimented with an unofficial character class—the mystic—focused on psionic powers. Through its features and subclasses, the mystic allowed you to create a character who echoed the abilities of other classes in the game but with a psionic twist. As much as many playtesters enjoyed the psionic themes in the mystic, feedback was also clear that the class encroached on other classes' territory and that it was often too complex, too powerful, or both. Following that feedback, we've decided to say farewell to the mystic and explore other ways of giving players psi-themed powers, as we did with the features of the Great Old One warlock in the *Player's Handbook*.

In 2019 and now in 2020, we're enjoying that exploration, looking into providing options (subclasses, spells, and feats) that allow different types of characters to manifest psionic power.

The philosophy of this approach is most akin to the one taken in the 1st edition of D&D, where psionic powers weren't the domain of any particular class but were available for characters of different types to experience.

We've crafted the new options in this article to work seamlessly with the D&D you're already playing. And hearing your desire for psionic options to feel like one another in some way, we've woven a common thread through the psionic subclasses and feats: the Psionic Talent die.

We invite you to try out these new options the same way you try out any other subclass, spell, or feat. And as always, we look forward to hearing what you think!

Is Psi a Form of Magic?

Psi is a supernatural power that emanates from the mind. Like other forms of supernatural power in D&D, it can be used to create magical phenomena, yet it can create other sorts of phenomena as well. In the game's rules, only certain supernatural effects are classified as magical: magic items, spells, spell attacks, powers fueled by spell slots, and any other effect that the rules explicitly call magical. This distinction is rarely relevant in play, typically coming up only when something like an *antimagic field* shows up.

From a storytelling standpoint, some supernatural effects in D&D weave their power into a formalized form—a spell, for instance—that other effects can disrupt. In contrast, there are other supernatural effects that are so wild, formless, or subtle that it is difficult or impossible to disrupt them. In this article, some of the psionic powers create what the rules consider to be magic and some don't.

Fighter

At 3rd level, a fighter gains the Martial Archetype feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Psi Knight.

Psi Knight

Awake to the psionic power within, a Psi Knight is a fighter who augments their physical might with psi-infused weapon strikes, telekinetic lashes, and barriers of mental force. Many githyanki train to become such knights, as do some of the most disciplined high elves. In the world of Athas, renowned gladiators in the arenas of the Sorcerer-Kings are often Psi Knights, and in Eberron, the psionic kalashtar

view membership in this knighthood as a special honor.

As a Psi Knight, you might have honed your psionic abilities through solo discipline, unlocked it under the tutelage of a master, or refined it at an academy dedicated to wielding the mind's power as both weapon and shield.

Psionic Talent

3rd-level Psi Knight feature

You harbor a wellspring of psionic power within yourself, an energy that ebbs and flows as you channel it in various ways. This power is represented by your Psionic Talent die, the starting size of which is a d6.

Psionic Talent Options. You can use your Psionic Talent die in the following ways:

Protective Field. When you or another creature you can see within 30 feet of you takes damage, you can use your reaction to roll your Psionic Talent die and reduce the damage taken by the number rolled plus your Intelligence modifier (minimum reduction of 1), as you create a momentary shield of telekinetic force.

Psi-Powered Leap. When you make a high or long jump, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and extend the distance of the jump, up to a number of feet equal to twice the number rolled plus twice your Intelligence modifier (minimum of 1 extra foot). This extra distance costs you only 1 foot of movement.

Telekinetic Strike. You can propel your attacks with telekinetic force. Once on each of your turns, immediately after you deal damage to a target within 30 feet of you with a weapon attack, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and also deal force damage to the target equal to the number rolled.

Changing the Die's Size. If you roll the highest number on your Psionic Talent die, it decreases by one die size after the roll. This represents you burning through your psionic energy. For example, if the die is a d6 and you roll a 6, it becomes a d4. If it's a d4 and you roll a 4, it becomes unusable until you finish a long rest.

Conversely, if you roll a 1 on your Psionic Talent die, it increases by one die size after the roll, up to its starting size. This represents you conserving psionic energy for later use. For example, if you roll a 1 on a d4, the die then becomes a d6.

Whenever you finish a long rest, your Psionic Talent die resets to its starting size. When you reach certain levels in this class, the starting size of your Psionic Talent die increases: at 5th level (d8), 11th level (d10), and 17th level (d12).

Psi Replenishment. As a bonus action, you can calm your mind for a moment and restore your Psionic Talent die to its starting size. You then can't use Psi Replenishment again until you finish a long rest.

Telekinetic Adept

7th-level Psi Knight feature

You have mastered new ways to use your telekinesis:

Psionic Thrust. When you deal damage to a target with the Telekinetic Strike of your Psionic Talent, you can force the target to make a Strength saving throw against a DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Intelligence modifier. Unless the save succeeds, you can knock the target prone or move it up to 10 feet in any direction horizontally.

Telekinetic Movement. If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can move an object or a creature with your mind. As an action, you target one loose object that is Large or smaller or one willing creature, other than yourself. If you can see the target and it is within 30 feet of you, you can move it up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space you can see. Alternatively, if it is a Tiny object, you can move it to or from your hand. Either way, you can move the target horizontally, vertically, or both. When you take this action, your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die size.

Psi-Enhanced Metabolism

10th-level Psi Knight feature

The psionic energy flowing through you has bolstered your mind and body. You have resistance to poison and psychic damage, and you are immune to the poisoned condition.

Bulwark of Force

15th-level Psi Knight feature

You can shield yourself and others with telekinetic force. As a bonus action, you can choose creatures, which can include you, that you can see within 30 feet of you, up to a number

of creatures equal to your Intelligence modifier (minimum of one creature). Each of the chosen creatures is protected by half cover for 1 minute or until you're incapacitated.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest, unless you decrease your Psionic Talent die by one die size to use this feature again.

Telekinetic Master

18th-level Psi Knight feature

Your ability to move creatures and objects with your mind is matched by few. If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can cast the *telekinesis* spell, requiring no components. Your spellcasting ability for the spell is Intelligence. When you cast this spell, your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die size.

Rogue

At 3rd level, a rogue gains the Roguish Archetype feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Soulnife.

Soulnife

Most assassins strike with physical weapons, and many burglars and spies use thieves' tools to infiltrate secure locations, whereas a Soulnife strikes and infiltrates with the mind, cutting through barriers both physical and psychic. These rogues discover psionic power within themselves and channel it to do their roguish work. They find easy employment as members of thieves' guilds, though they are often mistrusted by rogues who are leery of anyone using strange mind powers to conduct their business, and most governments would be happy to employ a Soulnife as a spy.

Amid the trees of ancient forests on the Material Plane and in the Feywild, some wood elves walk the path of the Soulnife, serving as silent, lethal guardians of their woods. In the endless war among the gith, a githzerai is encouraged to become a Soulnife when stealth is required against the githyanki foe, and in the world of Athas, a Sorcerer-King often turns to a Soulnife to eliminate an enemy, just as an insurgent Soulnife seeks to undermine that Sorcerer-King's rule.

As a Soulnife, your psionic abilities might have haunted you since you were a child, only

revealing their potential as you experienced the stress of adventure. Or you might have sought out a reclusive order of psionic adepts and spent years learning how to manifest your power.

Psionic Talent

3rd-level Soulknife feature

You harbor a wellspring of psionic power within yourself, an energy that ebbs and flows as you channel it in various ways. This power is represented by your Psionic Talent die, the starting size of which is a d6.

Psionic Talent Options. You can use your Psionic Talent die in the following ways:

Psi-Bolstered Knack. When your non-psionic training fails you, you can tap into your psionic power to help: if you fail an ability check using a skill or tool with which you have proficiency, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and add the number rolled to the check, potentially turning failure into success.

Psychic Whispers. You can use your psychic abilities to establish telepathic communication between yourself and others—perfect for quiet infiltration. As an action, you give yourself and at least one other creature the ability to speak telepathically with each other. When you do so, roll your Psionic Talent die, and choose creatures you can see, up to a number of creatures equal to the number rolled. For 1 hour, the chosen creatures can speak telepathically with you, and you can speak telepathically with them. To send or receive a message (no action required), you and the other creature must be within 1 mile of each other. A creature can't use this telepathy if it can't speak any languages, and a creature can end the telepathic connection at any time (no action required). You and the creature don't need to speak a common language to understand each other.

Changing the Die's Size. If you roll the highest number on your Psionic Talent die, it decreases by one die size after the roll. This represents you burning through your psionic energy. For example, if the die is a d6 and you roll a 6, it becomes a d4. If it's a d4 and you roll a 4, it becomes unusable until you finish a long rest.

Conversely, if you roll a 1 on your Psionic Talent die, it increases by one die size after the roll, up to its starting size. This represents you conserving psionic energy for later use. For

example, if you roll a 1 on a d4, the die then becomes a d6.

Whenever you finish a long rest, your Psionic Talent die resets to its starting size. When you reach certain levels in this class, the starting size of your Psionic Talent die increases: at 5th level (d8), 11th level (d10), and 17th level (d12).

Psi Replenishment. As a bonus action, you can calm your mind for a moment and restore your Psionic Talent die to its starting size. You then can't use Psi Replenishment again until you finish a long rest.

Psychic Blades

3rd-level Soulknife feature

You can manifest your psionic power as shimmering blades of psychic energy. When you are about to make a melee or ranged weapon attack against a creature, you can manifest a psychic blade from your free hand and make the attack with that blade. This magic blade is a simple melee weapon with the finesse and thrown properties. It has a normal range of 60 feet and no long range, and on a hit, it deals psychic damage equal to 1d6 plus the ability modifier you used for the attack roll. The blade vanishes immediately after it hits or misses its target, and it leaves no mark on its target if it deals damage.

After you attack with the blade, you can make a melee or ranged weapon attack with a second psychic blade as a bonus action on the same turn, provided your other hand is free to create it. The damage die of this bonus attack is 1d4, instead of 1d6.

Soul Blades

9th-level Soulknife feature

Your Psychic Blades are now an expression of your psi-suffused soul, giving you finer control over them in the following ways:

Homing Strikes. If you make an attack roll with your Psychic Blades and miss the target, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and add the number rolled to the attack roll. If this causes the attack to hit, your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die size, regardless of the number rolled.

Psychic Teleportation. If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can hurl your Psychic Blades to magically transport yourself to another location. As a bonus action, you

manifest one of your Psychic Blades and throw it at an unoccupied space you can see, up to a number of feet away equal to 5 times the highest number on your Psionic Talent die. You then teleport to that space, the blade vanishes, and your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die size.

Psionic Veil

13th-level Soulknife feature

You can weave a veil of psychic static to mask yourself. As an action, you can magically become invisible, along with anything you are wearing or carrying, for 10 minutes or until you dismiss this effect (no action required). This invisibility ends if you deal damage to a creature or if you force a creature to make a saving throw.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest, unless you decrease your Psionic Talent die by one die size to use this feature again.

Rend Mind

17th-level Soulknife feature

You can sweep your Psychic Blades directly through a creature's mind. When you use your Psychic Blades to deal Sneak Attack damage to a creature, you can force that target to make a Wisdom saving throw (DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Dexterity modifier). Unless the save succeeds, the target is stunned until the end of your next turn.

Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest, unless you decrease your Psionic Talent die by one die size to use this feature again.

Sorcerer

At 1st level, a sorcerer gains the Sorcerous Origin feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Psionic Soul.

Psionic Soul

One day a light blazed forth within you—the illumination of psionic power. Your mind now simmers with this power, the full extent of which you won't fully grasp for years to come. You can touch other minds with it and alter the world around you by using it to control the magical energy of the multiverse. Will this power shine from you as a hopeful beacon to others? Or will

you be a source of terror to those who feel the stab of your mind and witness the strange manifestations of your might?

Among githyanki and githzerai, the powers of Psionic Soul sorcerers are revered and marshaled on both sides of the gith war. In Eberron, many kalashtar dream of discovering this origin's abilities within themselves, and in Athas, more sorcerers are born with a Psionic Soul than with any other source of power. In the glades of primeval woods touched by the Feywild, children sometimes awaken to the wonders of psionic power. And in communities that survive Far Realm incursions, some folk are mutated into horrific aberrations, while a lucky few not only remain themselves, but also discover that psionic energy now suffuses their minds.

As a Psionic Soul sorcerer, you decide how you acquired your powers. Were you born with them, and did they manifest throughout childhood? Or did an extraordinary event later in life leave you shining with psionic awareness? Consult the Psionic Origins table for a possible origin of your power.

Psionic Origins

d10	Origin
1	You were exposed to the Far Realm's warping influence. You can now use your mind in ways you never thought possible, and you're also convinced that a tendril is growing upon you.
2	A psychic wind from the Astral Plane carried psionic energy into your being. When you use your powers now, faint motes of light sparkle around you.
3	You or your ancestor were trained by a githzerai monk to unlock the psionic potential within yourself.
4	A spirit haunts your mind, lending incredible power to your thoughts. When you sleep, the spirit's memories invade your dreams.
5	Deep in a forest touched by the Feywild, you drank from a glimmering stream, and now your mind shines with power. Beasts and fey creatures are often now friendly to you, as if they can sense the light within you.
6	Upon recovering from a near-fatal injury, you found yourself with psionic powers. Whenever you use them, your old wound tingles.

- 7 You were implanted with a mind flayer tadpole, but the ceremorphosis never completed. And now the psionic power is yours. When you use it, your flesh shines with a strange mucus.
- 8 As a child, you had an imaginary friend that looked like a flumph or a strange platypus-like creature. One day, it gifted you with psionic powers, which have ended up being not so imaginary.
- 9 Your nightmares whisper the truth to you: your psionic powers are not your own. You draw them from your vestigial twin!
- 10 You grew up near the lair of a sapphire dragon, and now your eyes glow with sapphire light when you use your newfound powers.

Psionic Talent

1st-level Psionic Soul feature

You harbor a wellspring of psionic power within yourself, an energy that ebbs and flows as you channel it in various ways. This power is represented by your Psionic Talent die, the starting size of which is a d6.

Psionic Talent Options. You can use your Psionic Talent die in the following ways:

Psionic Discovery. You can unlock the ability to cast a mind-oriented sorcerer spell you don't already know. After meditating for 10 minutes (which can be done during a rest), roll your Psionic Talent die, and choose a sorcerer spell of a level for which you have spell slots and that is in the school of divination or enchantment. You know the chosen spell for a number of hours equal to the number you rolled.

Psychic Sorcery. When you cast a spell, you can use your mind to form it, rather than relying on words, gestures, and materials. To do so, roll your Psionic Talent die. The spell then requires no verbal component, and if you rolled the level of the spell or higher, the spell doesn't require somatic or material components either.

Telepathic Speech. You can form a telepathic connection between your mind and the mind of another. As a bonus action, choose one creature you can see, and roll your Psionic Talent die. For a number of hours equal to the number you rolled, you and the chosen creature can speak telepathically with each other while the two of you are within a

number of miles of each other equal to the number you rolled. To understand each other, you each must speak mentally in a language the other knows. The telepathic connection ends early if you use this ability to form a connection with a different creature.

Changing the Die's Size. If you roll the highest number on your Psionic Talent die, it decreases by one die size after the roll. This represents you burning through your psionic energy. For example, if the die is a d6 and you roll a 6, it becomes a d4. If it's a d4 and you roll a 4, it becomes unusable until you finish a long rest.

Conversely, if you roll a 1 on your Psionic Talent die, it increases by one die size after the roll, up to its starting size. This represents you conserving psionic energy for later use. For example, if you roll a 1 on a d4, the die then becomes a d6.

Whenever you finish a long rest, your Psionic Talent die resets to its starting size. When you reach certain levels in this class, the starting size of your Psionic Talent die increases: at 5th level (d8), 11th level (d10), and 17th level (d12).

Psi Replenishment. As a bonus action, you can calm your mind for a moment and restore your Psionic Talent die to its starting size. You then can't use Psi Replenishment again until you finish a long rest.

Psychic Strike

6th-level Psionic Soul feature

You have learned to channel additional psychic energy into your spells. Immediately after you deal damage to a creature with a sorcerer spell for which you expend a spell slot, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and also deal psychic damage to that creature equal to the number rolled. You can deal this extra damage only once per turn.

Mind Over Body

14th-level Psionic Soul feature

You can now use the psi that flows through you to give your body extraordinary abilities. As a bonus action, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and spend 1 or more sorcery points to magically transform yourself for a number of hours equal to the number rolled. Until the transformation ends, you gain one of the following benefits of your choice for each sorcery point you spent, choosing a different benefit for each point:

- You can see any invisible creature within 60 feet of you, provided it isn't behind total cover.
- You gain a flying speed equal to your walking speed, and you can hover.
- You gain a swimming speed equal to twice your walking speed, and you can breathe underwater.
- Your body, along with any equipment you are wearing or carrying, becomes pliable. You can move through any space as narrow as 1 inch without squeezing, and you can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

Psychic Aura

18th-level Psionic Soul feature

If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can unleash your psionic power in a crackling aura of psychic energy; as a bonus action, you can magically radiate this transparent, 30-foot-radius aura for 1 minute or until you're incapacitated or lose the use of your Psionic Talent die.

Whenever a creature starts its turn in the aura or moves into it for the first time on a turn, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and deal psychic damage to the creature, equaling the number rolled plus your Charisma modifier. If the creature takes any of this damage, its speed is halved until the start of its next turn.

New Spells

Here are a few new spells with a psionic theme.

Bard Spells

4th Level

intellect fortress (abjuration)

Sorcerer Spells

Cantrips (0 Level)

mind sliver (enchantment)

2nd Level

mind thrust (enchantment)

4th Level

intellect fortress (abjuration)

Warlock Spells

Cantrips (0 Level)

mind sliver (enchantment)

Wizard Spells

Cantrips (0 Level)

mind sliver (enchantment)

2nd Level

mind thrust (enchantment)

4th Level

intellect fortress (abjuration)

Spell Descriptions

The spells are presented in alphabetical order.

Intellect Fortress

4th-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

For the duration, you or one willing creature you can see within range has resistance to psychic damage, as well as advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, you can target one additional creature for each slot level above 4th. The creatures must be within 30 feet of each other when you target them.

Mind Sliver

Enchantment cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

You drive a disorienting spike of psychic energy into the mind of one creature you can see within range. The target must make an Intelligence saving throw. Unless the saving throw is successful, the target takes 1d6 psychic damage, and the first time it makes a saving throw before the end of your next turn, it must roll a d4 and subtract the number rolled from the save.

This spell's damage increases by 1d6 when you reach certain levels: 5th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

Mind Thrust

2nd-level enchantment

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

You thrust a lance of psychic disruption into the mind of one creature you can see within range. The target must make an Intelligence saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 3d6 psychic damage, and it can't take a reaction until the end of its next turn. Moreover, on its next turn, it must choose whether it gets a move, an action, or a bonus action; it gets only one of the three. On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage and suffers none of the spell's other effects.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can target one additional creature for each slot level above 2nd. The creatures must be within 30 feet of each other when you target them.

New Feats

New feats are presented here for groups that use the feat option in the *Player's Handbook*.

Metabolic Control

Prerequisite: Psionic Talent feature or Wild Talent feat

You have refined psionic control over your body's functions. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can take an action to channel your psionic power to nourish yourself for the next 24 hours, as if you consumed sufficient food and water for a day. When you take this action, your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die size.
- If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can meditate for 1 minute, at the end of which you gain the benefits of finishing a short rest, and your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die

size. You can't meditate in this way again until you finish a long rest.

Telekinetic

Prerequisite: Psionic Talent feature or Wild Talent feat

You learn to move things with your mind. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You learn the *mage hand* cantrip. You can cast it without verbal or somatic components, and you can make the spectral hand invisible. If you already know this spell, its range increases by 30 feet when you cast it. Its spellcasting ability is the ability increased by this feat.
- As a bonus action, you can try to telekinetically shove one creature you can see within 30 feet of you. When you do so, roll your Psionic Talent die, and the target must succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC 8 + your proficiency bonus + the ability modifier of the score increased by this feat) or be moved toward you or away from you a number of feet equal to 5 times the number you rolled. A creature can willingly fail this save.

Telepathic

Prerequisite: Psionic Talent feature or Wild Talent feat

You awaken the ability to mentally connect with others. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma score by 1, to a maximum of 20.
- You can speak telepathically to any creature you can see within 30 feet of you. Your telepathic utterances are in a language you know, and the creature understands you only if it knows that language. Your communication doesn't give the creature the ability to respond to you telepathically.
- If your Psionic Talent die is available, you can cast the *detect thoughts* spell, requiring no components. When you start casting the spell, your Psionic Talent die decreases by one die size. Your spellcasting ability for the spell is the ability increased by this feat.

Tower of Iron Will

Prerequisite: Psionic Talent feature or Wild Talent feat

Your mind's defenses are formidable. After you or another creature you can see within 30 feet of you fails a saving throw, you can use your reaction to roll your Psionic Talent die and add the number rolled to the saving throw, potentially causing it to succeed.

Wild Talent

You awaken to your psionic potential, which enhances your mind or body. Increase one ability score of your choice by 1, to a maximum of 20, to represent this enhancement.

You also harbor a wellspring of psionic power within yourself, an energy that ebbs and flows as you channel it in various ways. This power is represented by your Psionic Talent die, the starting size of which is a d6.

Psionic Talent Options. You can use your Psionic Talent die in the following ways:

Psi-Boosted Ability. When you make an ability check with the ability increased by this feat, you can roll your Psionic Talent die and add the number rolled to the check. You can choose to do so before or after rolling the d20, but before you know whether the check succeeded or failed.

Psi-Guided Strike. Once on each of your turns when you hit with an attack roll that uses the ability increased by this feat, you can roll your Psionic Talent die after you make the damage roll and then replace one of the damage dice with the number rolled on the Psionic Talent die.

Changing the Die's Size. If you roll the highest number on your Psionic Talent die, it decreases by one die size after the roll. This represents you burning through your psionic energy. For example, if the die is a d6 and you roll a 6, it becomes a d4. If it's a d4 and you roll a 4, it becomes unusable until you finish a long rest.

Conversely, if you roll a 1 on your Psionic Talent die, it increases by one die size after the roll, up to its starting size. This represents you conserving psionic energy for later use. For example, if you roll a 1 on a d4, the die then becomes a d6.

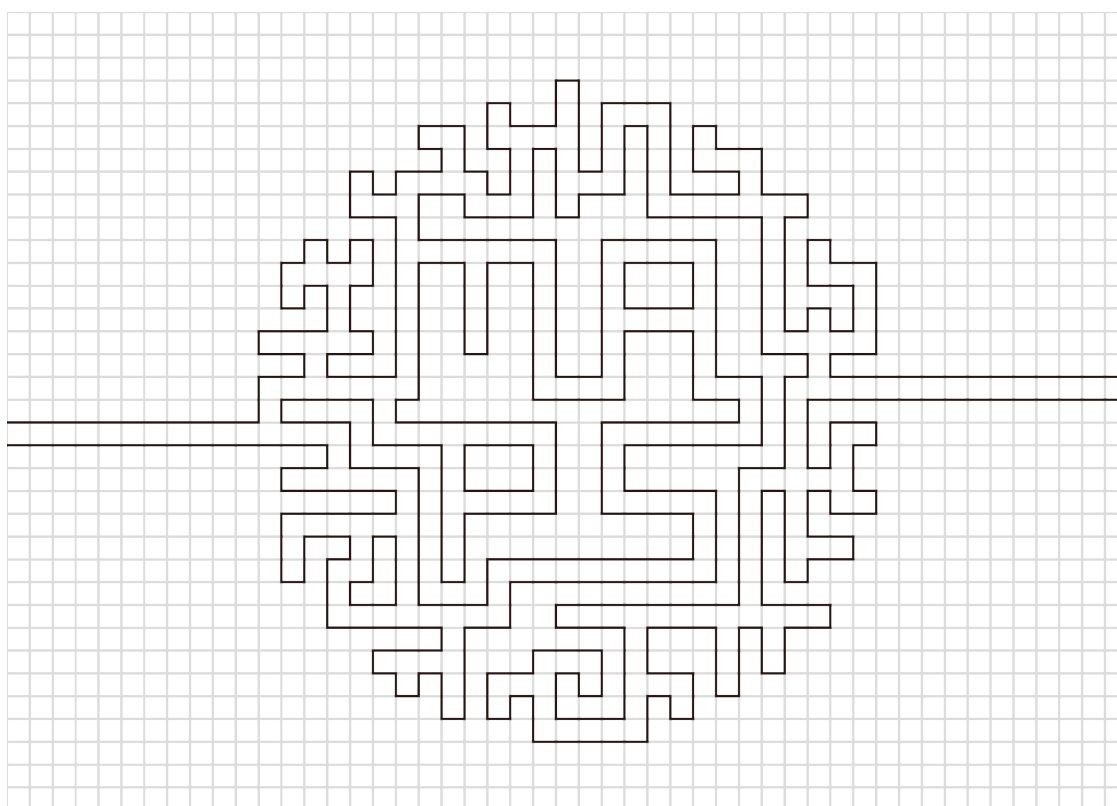
Whenever you finish a long rest, your Psionic Talent die resets to its starting size. When you reach certain levels, the starting size of your Psionic Talent die increases: at 5th level (d8), 11th level (d10), and 17th level (d12).

If you have a Psionic Talent die from another source, such as a class feature, you don't get more than one die; use only the one with the largest starting size.

Psi Replenishment. As a bonus action, you can calm your mind for a moment and restore your Psionic Talent die to its starting size. You then can't use Psi Replenishment again until you finish a long rest.

Maps of the Month: Eberron: Rising from the Last War, Dungeon of the Mad Mage, Heroes of Battle, Castle Greyhawk

As we hit the battlefield, we look at a variety of maps in support of military campaigns.



*WARNING: THESE MAPS MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS FOR
EBERRON: RISING FROM THE LAST WAR AND DUNGEON
OF THE MAD MAGE.*

EBERRON: RISING FROM THE LAST WAR

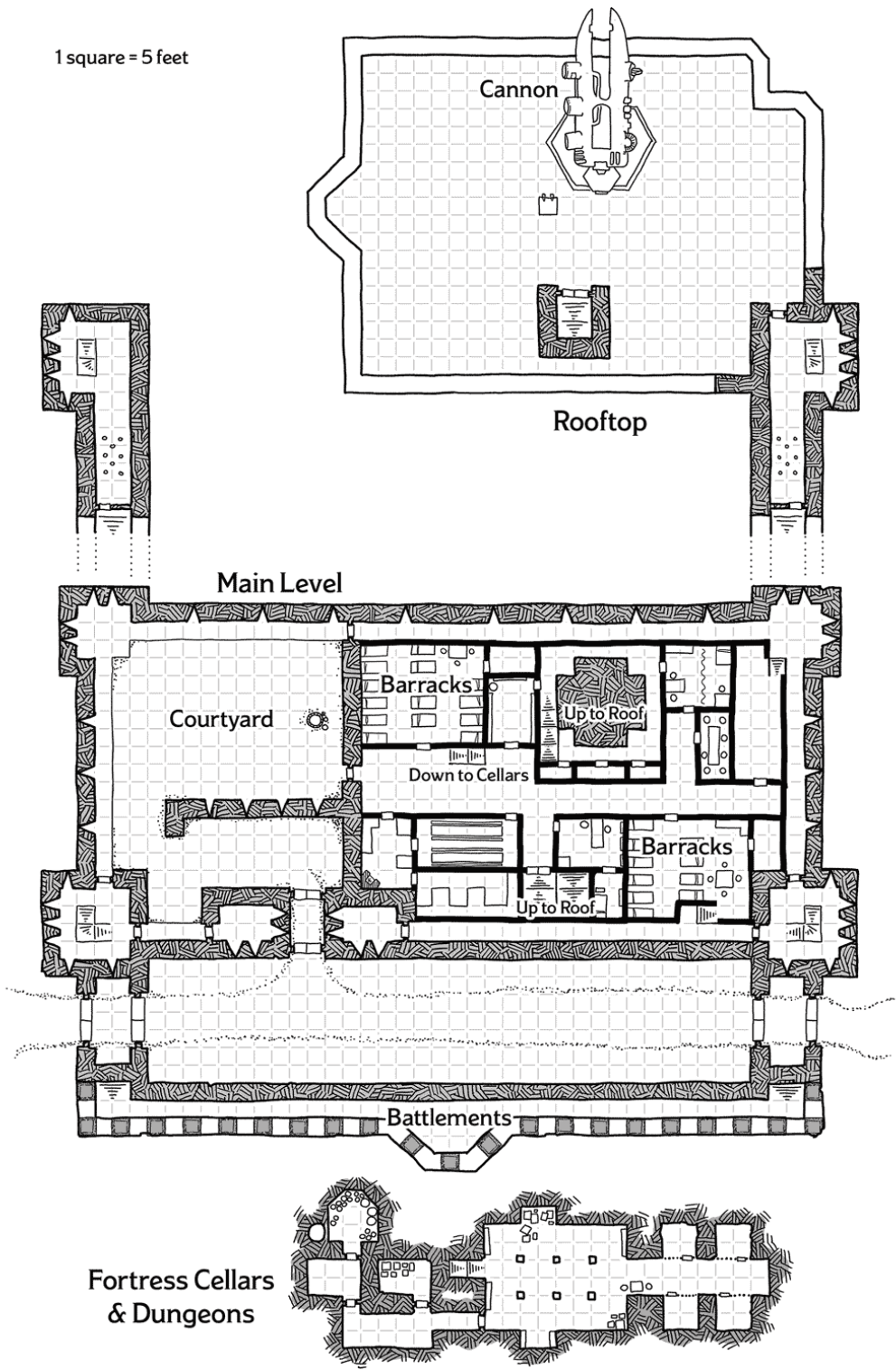
As the very title of the setting attests, Eberron is a world all too

familiar with warfare. Its continent of Khorvaire still recovers from the devastating Last War, with military outposts serving a variety of purposes both during and after the war: as rest stops for platoons on the move, garrisons for inactive troops, armories where weapons are stored, staging points for scouts and rangers who keep an eye on nearby enemy movements, and defensive fortifications meant to protect passes, bridges, or other key strategic locations.

The following map looks at one such outpost, featuring a simple building containing barracks, officers' quarters, and storage areas encased within multiple rings of fortification. A normal approach to the inner compound involves passing through one of two gate houses (protected by arrow slits and murder holes), crossing an open courtyard (with more arrow slits), passing through another small gate area, and traversing the training yard before finally reaching the lone entrance.

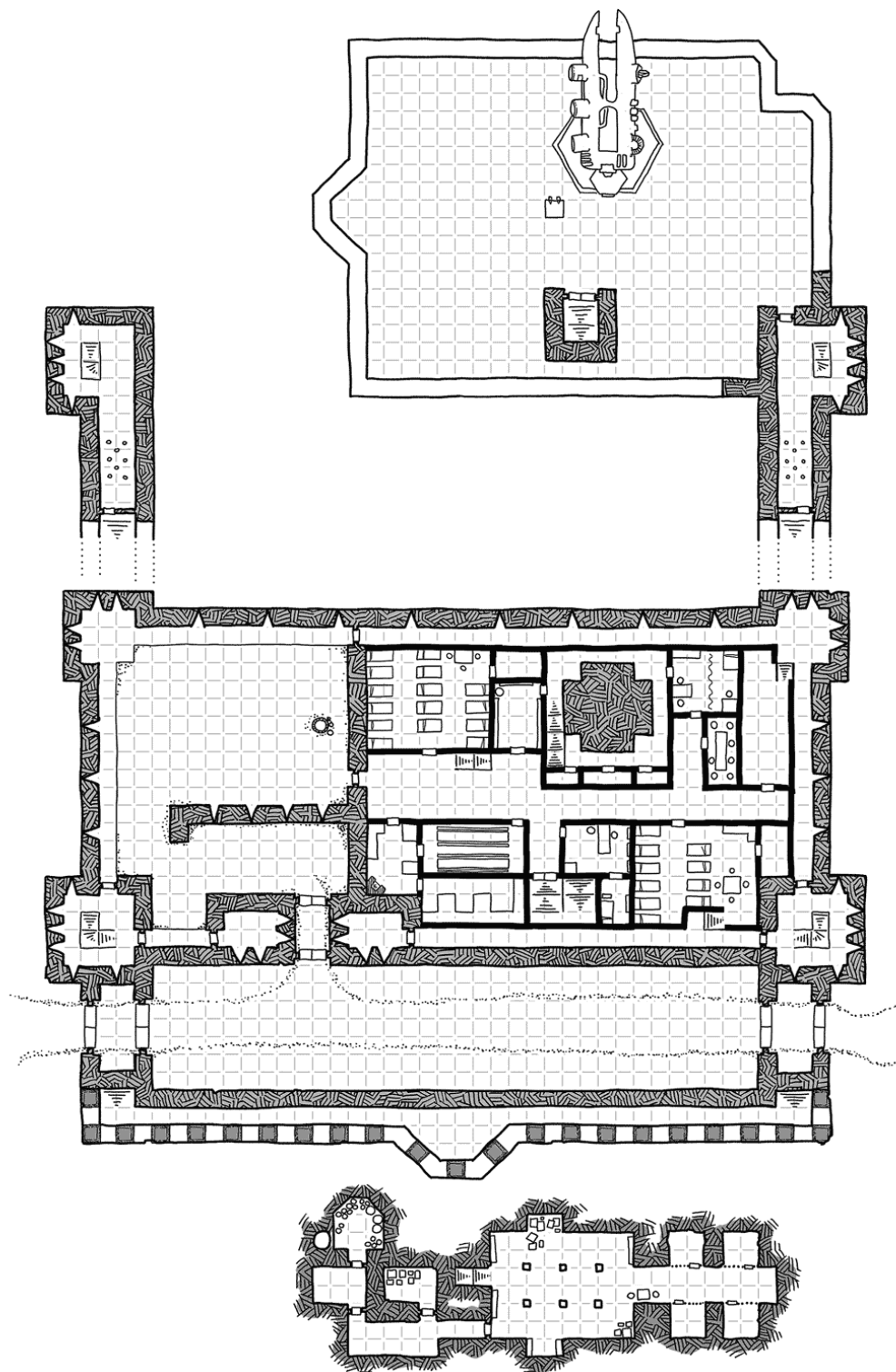
What mission might require crossing such dangerous ground? Perhaps there's an urgent need to disable the rooftop artillery (akin to *Band of Brothers'* **Brécourt Manor Assault**).

Tagged



(Select to view)

(high res image [here](#))



(Select to view)

Untagged
(high res image [here](#))

Eberron: Rising From The Last War is available now with an MSRP of \$49.95. You can find it at your [local game store](#), book stores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), as well as [D&D Beyond](#), [Roll20](#), and [Fantasy Grounds](#). It's also available on [Steam](#), or online at retailers such

as [Amazon](#).

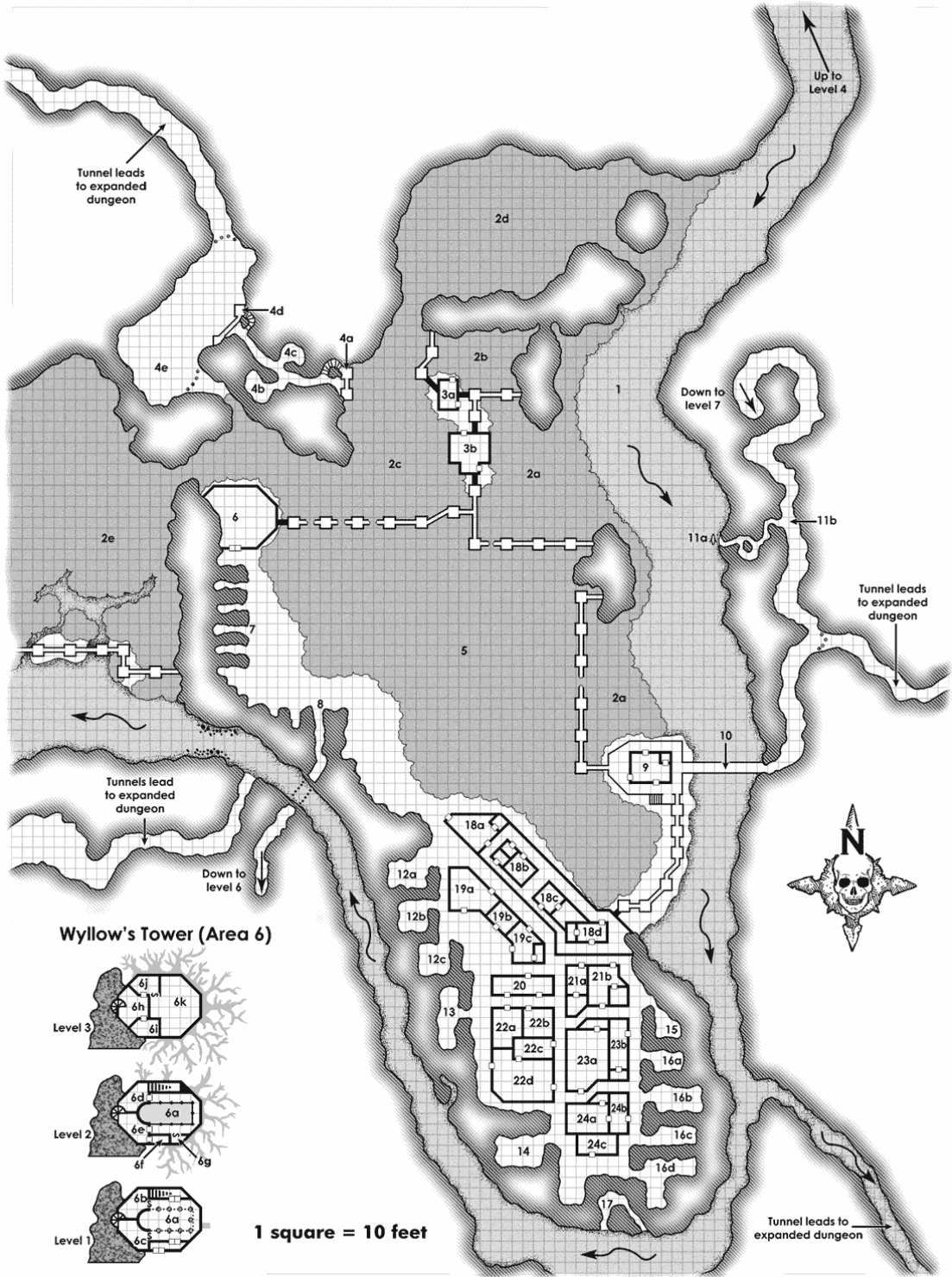
DUNGEON OF THE MAD MAGE

When it comes to dungeon maps, it's hard to beat the sprawling wonder of those found within *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage*. We've plucked another level from the book for use in your games:

Level 5: Wyllowwood

This subterranean level includes real forests nourished by magic, which Halaster regularly repopulates with birds, insects, rodents, and larger mammals. You might make use of the map for any sylvan location in your game (whether subterranean or surface) complete with rushing rivers, fortress walls, and secret tunnels. One can never have enough secret tunnels.

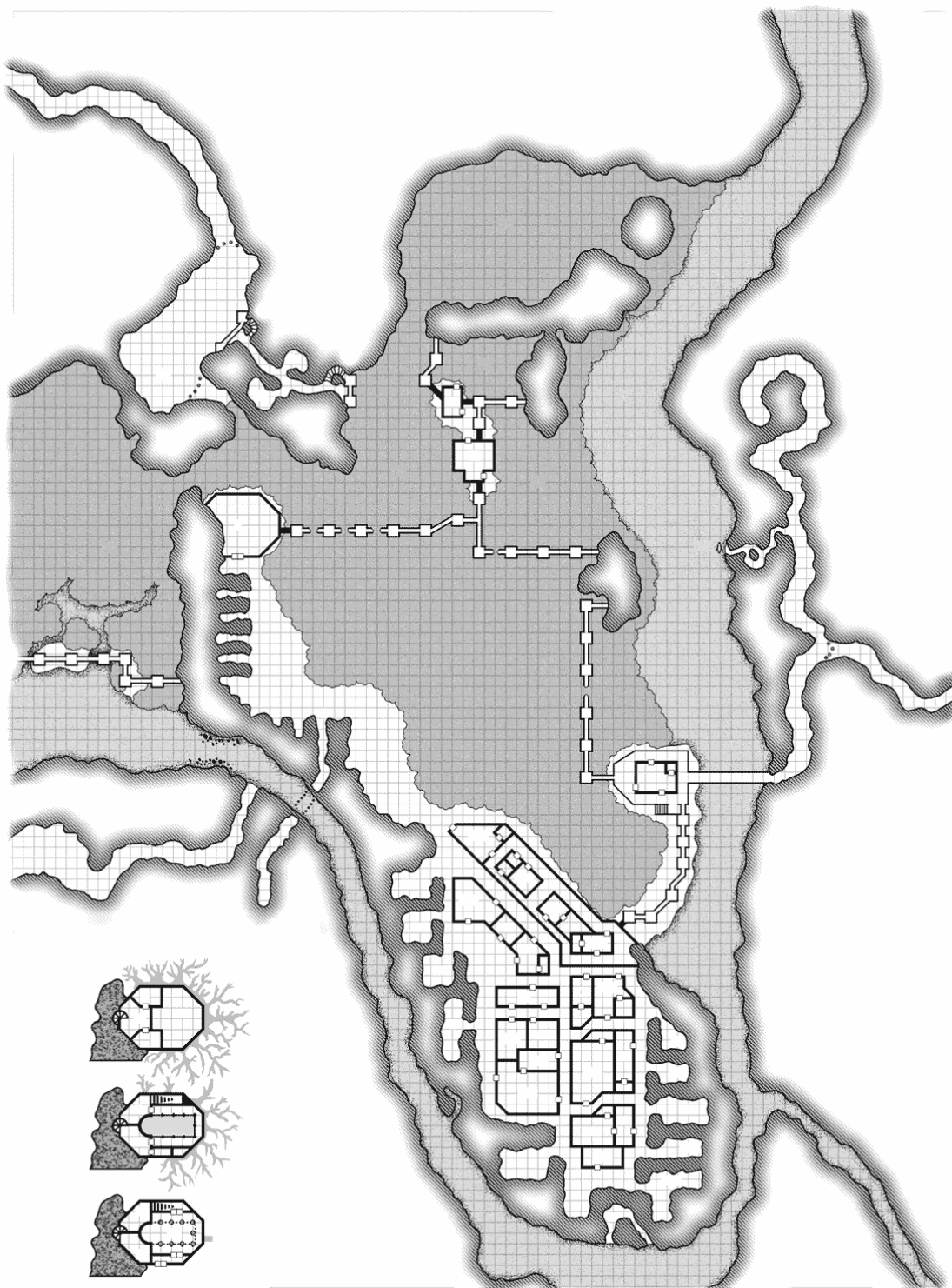
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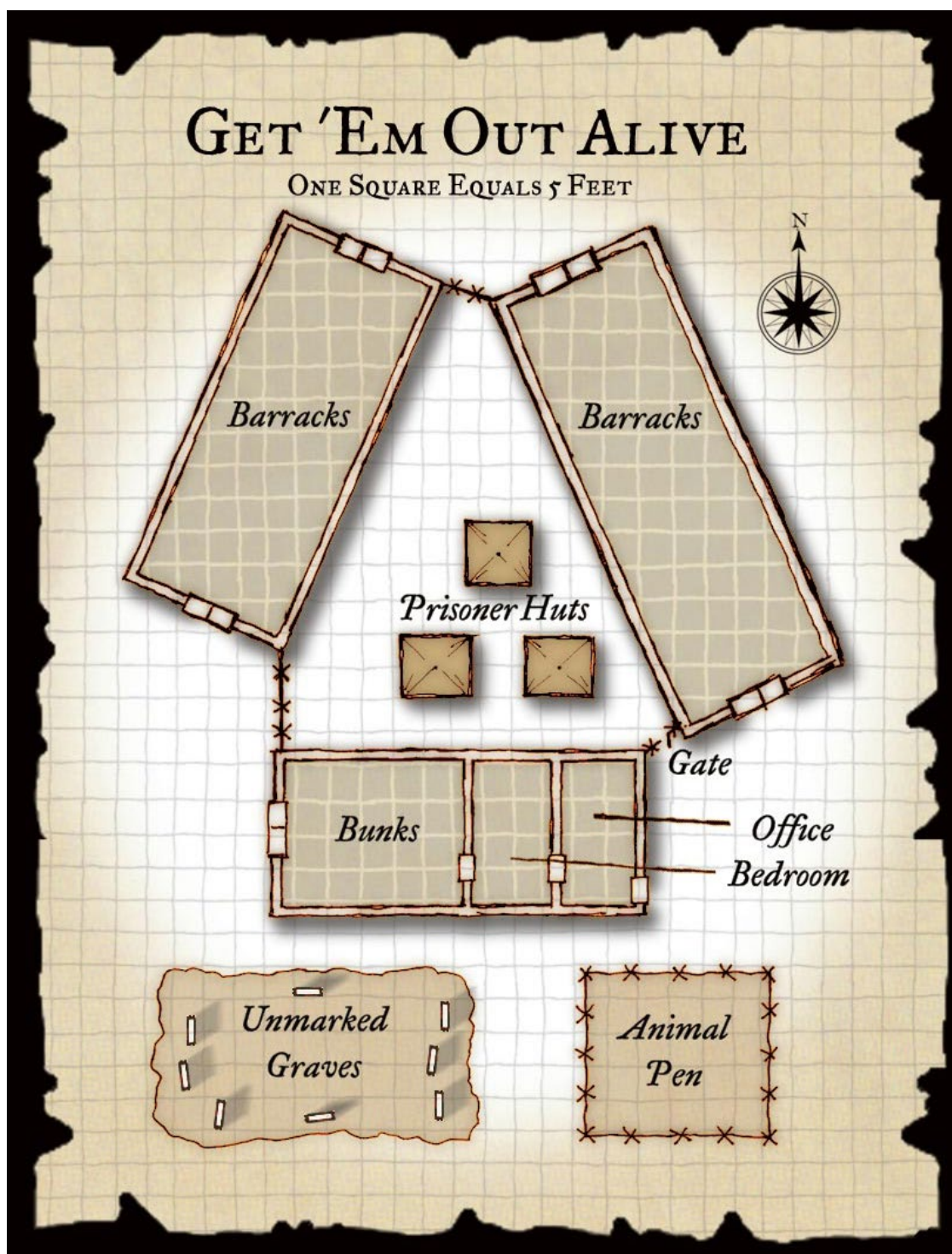
(high res image [here](#))

Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage is available now with an MSRP of \$49.95. You can find it at your [local game store](#), book stores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#). It's also available via [Fantasy Grounds](#), [Steam](#), [Roll20](#), and at [D&D Beyond](#).

HEROES OF BATTLE

In this issue's *Dragon Classics* we look back at *Heroes of Battle* and below we've included a few maps from the book to support further battlefield scenarios in your campaigns:

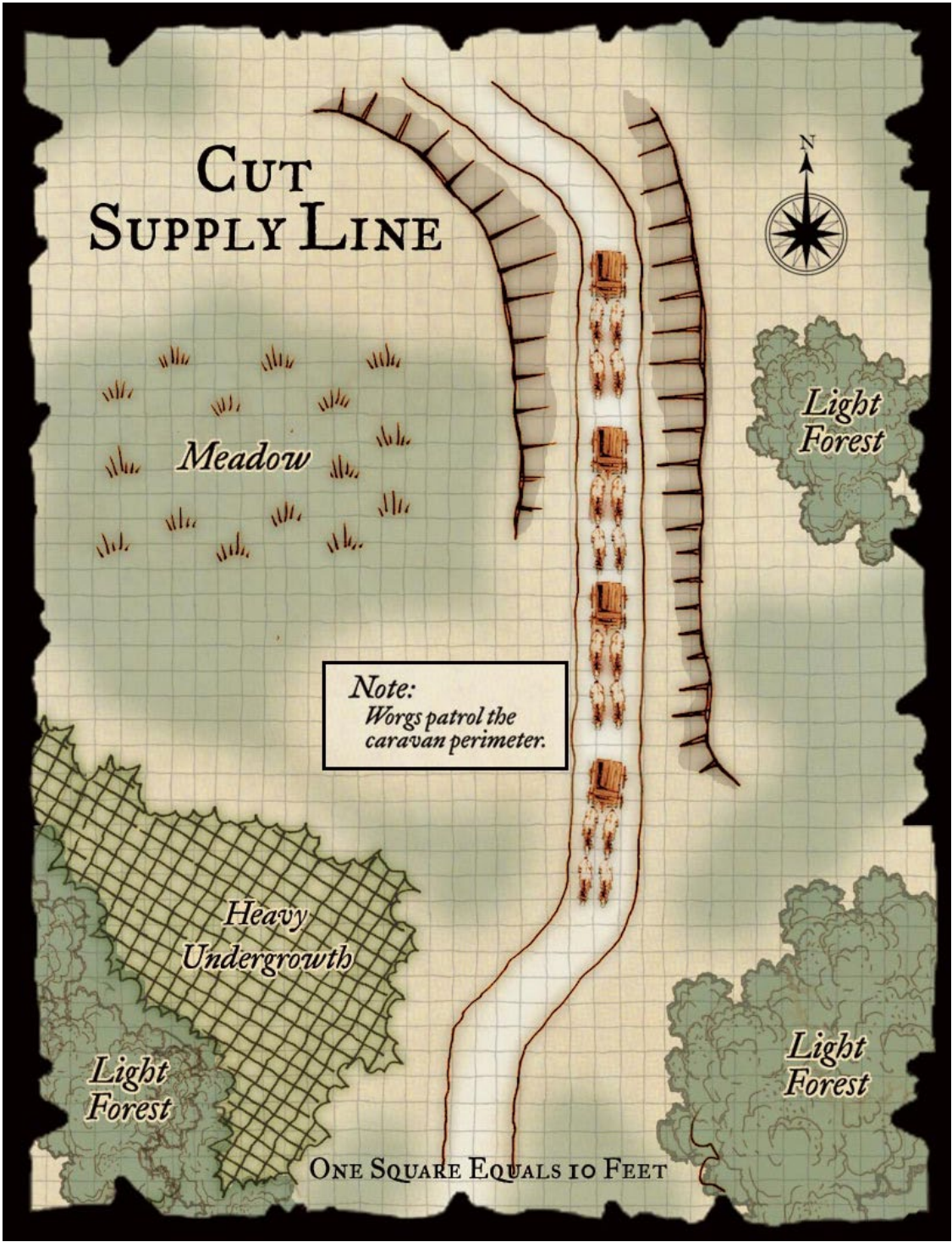
Scenario 1: Get 'Em Out Alive



(Select to view)

(high res image [here](#))

Scenario 2: Cut Supply Line



(Select to view)

(high res image [here](#))

Scenario 3: Battle of Shaura Valley



(Select to view)

(high res image [here](#))

As an added resource, you can also download this PDF of map keys for labeling any barriers, obstacles, or hazards on your battle maps:

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

Heroes of Battle can be found at the DMs Guild in PDF form for \$11.99. Prepare for war!

CASTLE GREYHAWK

Once adventurers have breached the castle walls and explored its corridors (whether it's Castle Ravenloft, Cragmaw Castle, or even the Hall of the Fire Giant King), what lies beneath?

As seen above, *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage* offers extensive dungeon levels that can be implemented into your game. Another example of a dungeon that can be used in any adventure is 2007's *Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk*—especially if you favor elaborate vertical exploration!

The ruins in question refer to the famed Castle Greyhawk, comprised here of three towers connected below ground: the Towers of Zagy, Magic, and War. We've provided a map of the towers' elaborate "roots" (which, when looking at them, could work for an adventure featuring an army of giant rats, giant ants, or perhaps competing armies of both networking their tunnels to strike at each other's towers).

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

In addition, we've added links to further dungeon maps from the adventure, which are available to download below:

Map 1: Abandoned Dungeon Area

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

Map 2: Ruined Mining Area

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

Map 3: Bridge Over a Vast Chasm

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)

Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk can be found at the DMs Guild in PDF form for \$14.99. The good people of Greyhawk need you. What are you waiting for?

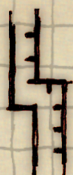
Cartographers

As always, our appreciation goes out to our amazing cartographers; this issue, these include Todd Gamble, Dyson Logos, and Mike Schley.

[BACK TO TOP](#)



FENCE
DC 20 JUMP
DC 15 RIDE
+1 SQUARE



PARAPET
[ATOP WALL]
COVER AS
LOW WALL



WALL
SEE DMG P.60



**WALL
OF FIRE**
SEE PH P.298



**WALL
OF FORCE**
SEE PH P.298



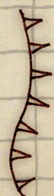
**WALL
OF ICE**
SEE PH P.299



**WALL
OF IRON**
SEE PH P.299



WALL OF THORNS
SEE PH P.300



FRAISE
HALF SPEED OR
1d4 SPIKES HIT AT
+10 FOR 1d8 DAMAGE



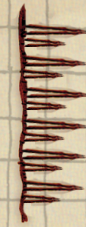
CREVASSE
DC 15 CLIMB



HEDGEROW
AS LOW WALL
+2 SQUARES



BARRICADE
DC 10 CLIMB



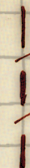
ABATIS
DC 10 CLIMB



RAZORWIRE
SEE DMG P.71



TRENCH
COVER,
+1 SQUARE
TO LEAVE



TRIPLINE
DC 15 REFLEX
OR PRONE



**LIGHT
DEBRIS**
DC 10 BALANCE
TO RUN



**HEAVY
DEBRIS**
COVER,
+1 SQUARE,
NO RUNNING



STALAGMITE



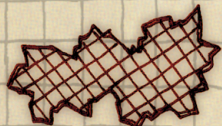
STALACTITE



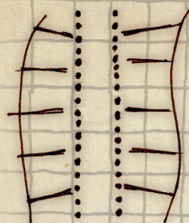
MASSIVE TREE
COVER,
CLIMB DC 15



TREE TRUNK
+2 AC, +1 REFLEX



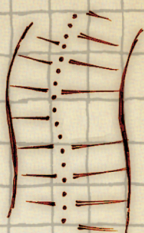
**HEAVY
UNDERGROWTH**
+3 SQUARES, 30%
CONCEALMENT



RAMPART
COVER,
STEEP SLOPES ON BOTH SIDES



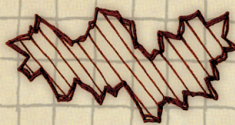
FOXHOLE
+8 AC



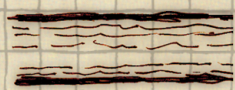
BERM
COVER,
STEEP SLOPE ON ONE SIDE



CRATER
COVER,
STEEP SLOPE
ON INSIDE



**LIGHT
UNDERGROWTH**
+1 SQUARE
CONCEALMENT



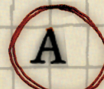
RIVER
DC 10 SWIM IF SLOW,
DC 15 SWIM IF FAST



STREAM
+1 SQUARE



HOT SPRING
1d6 DAMAGE
PER ROUND,
MAY HAVE GEYSER



ACID POOL
1d6 DAMAGE
PER ROUND



FIRE
1d6 DAMAGE
REFLEX DC 15
OR CATCH ON FIRE



MINEFIELD
BLAST DISKS
OR GLYPHS
SEE PH P. 236



SMOKE
CONCEALMENT,
VISION LIMITED
TO 30 FT.

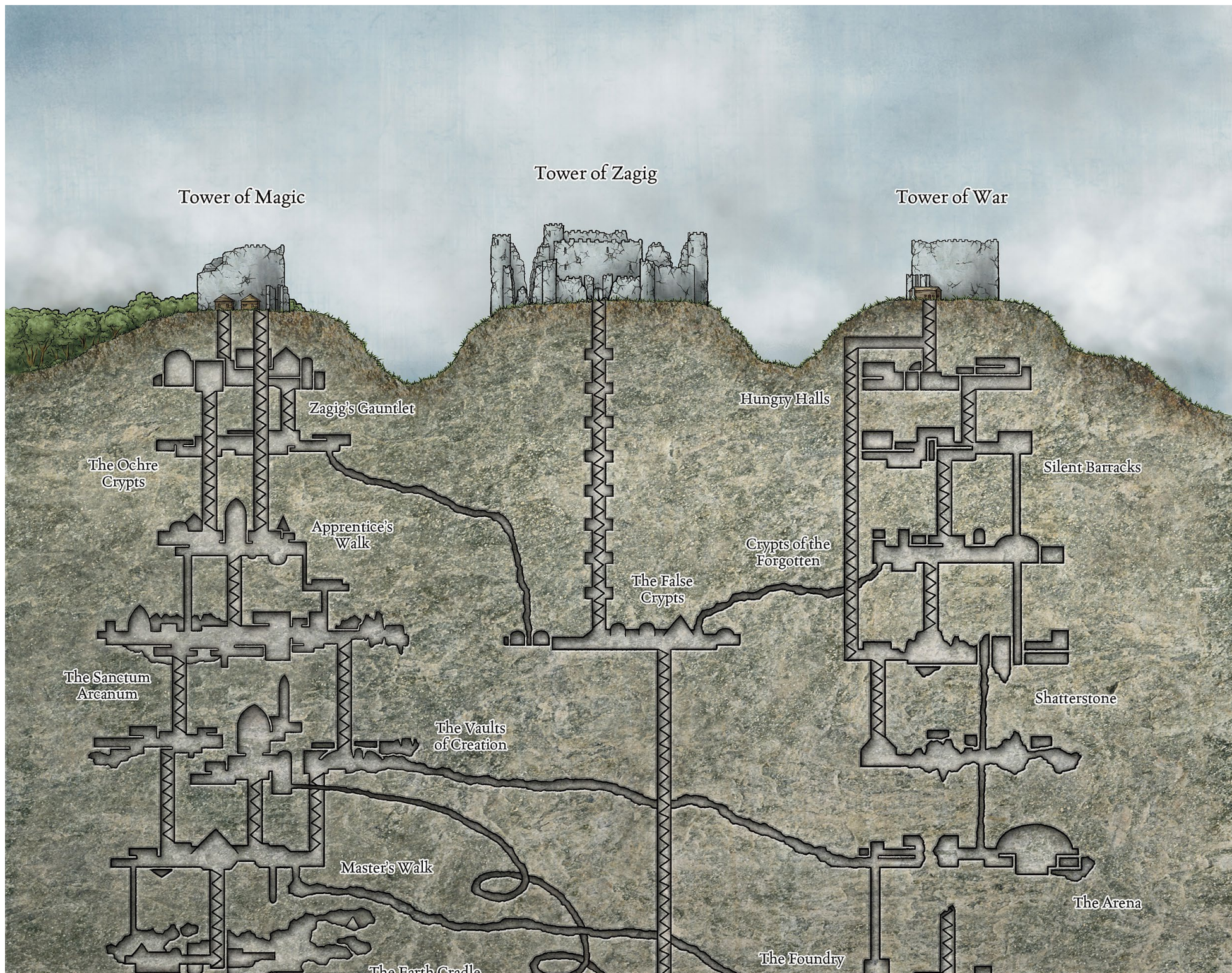


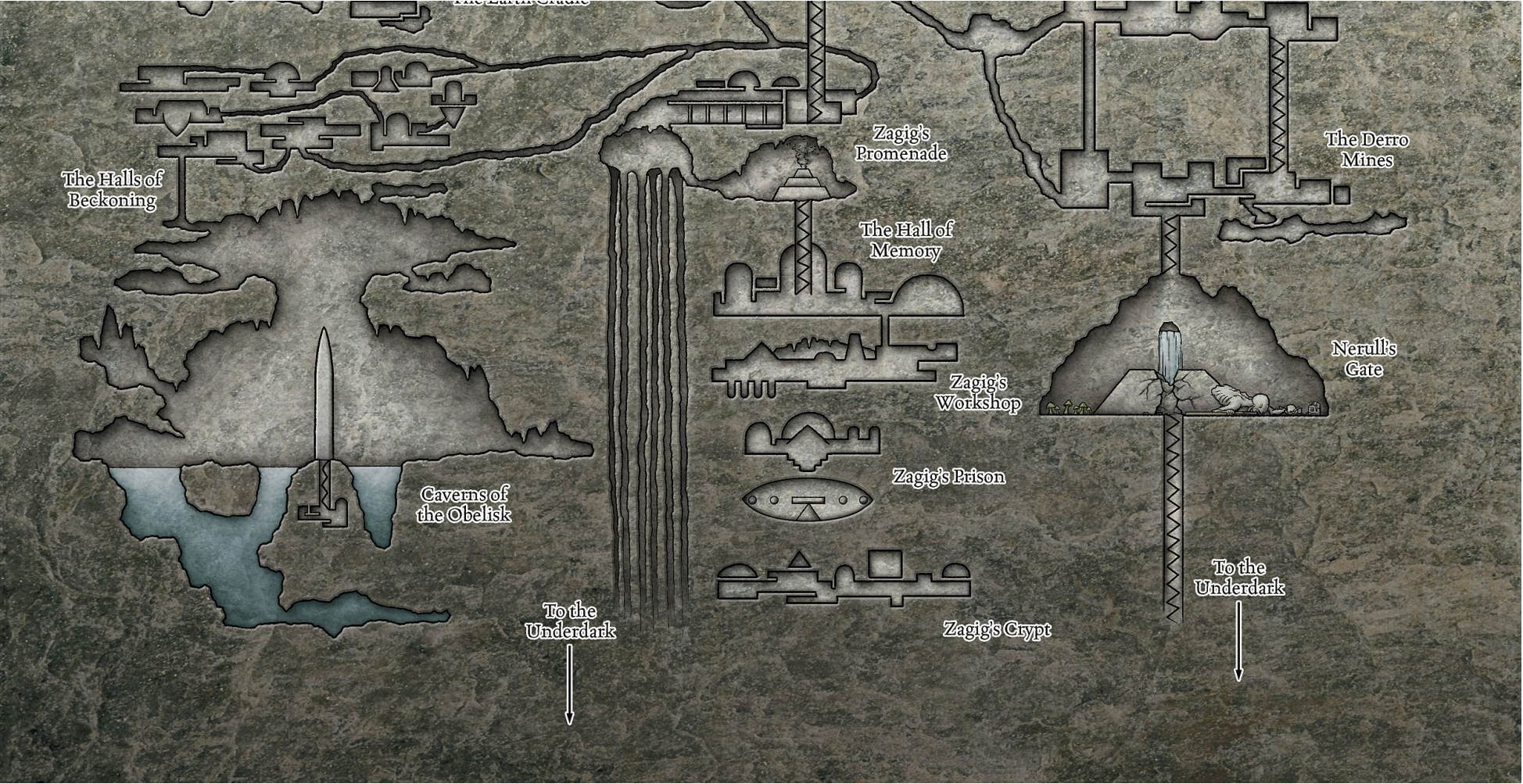
PILED BODIES
FORCES
MORALE CHECK

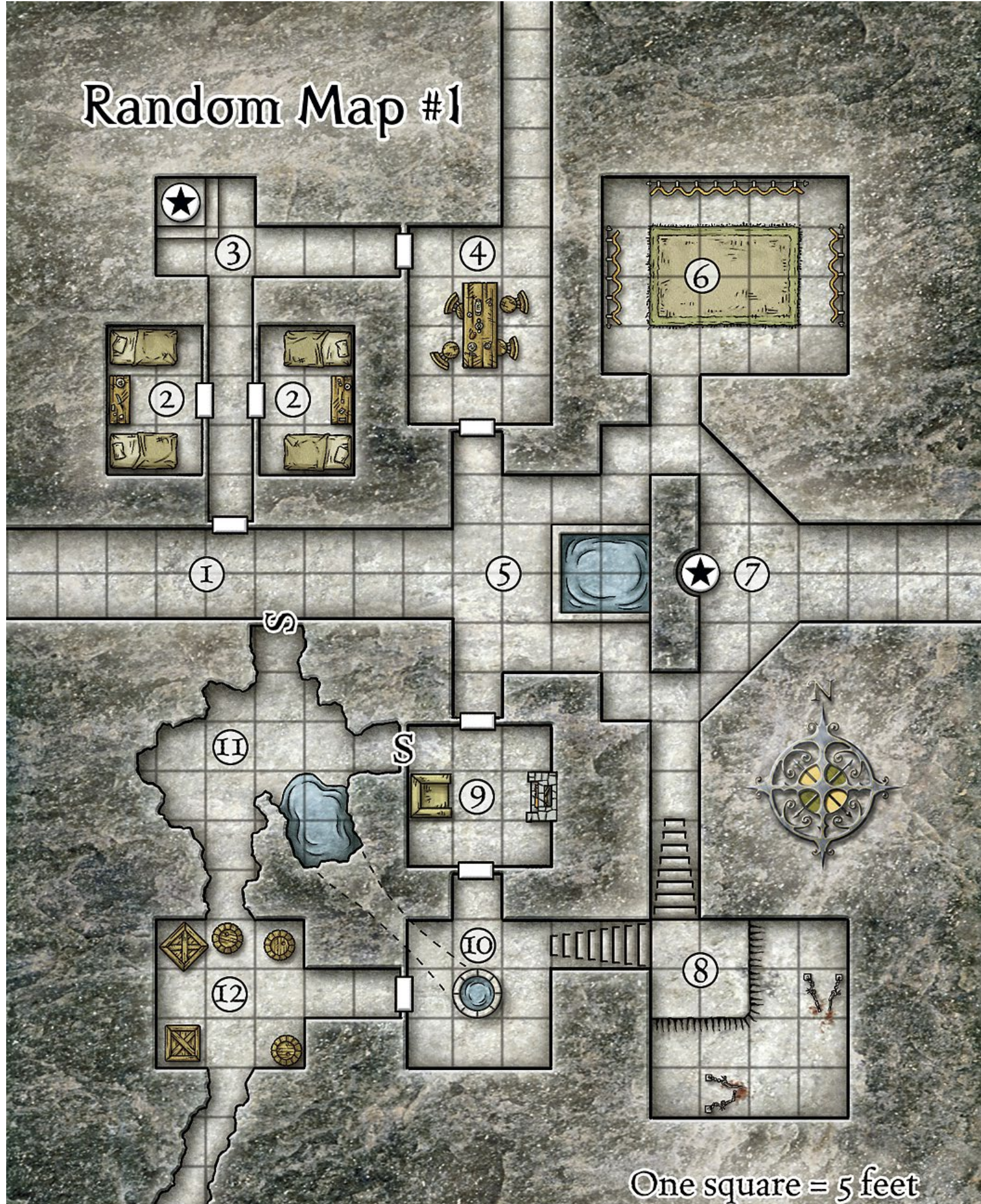


**CAMOUFLAGED
PIT**
SEE DMG P. 70

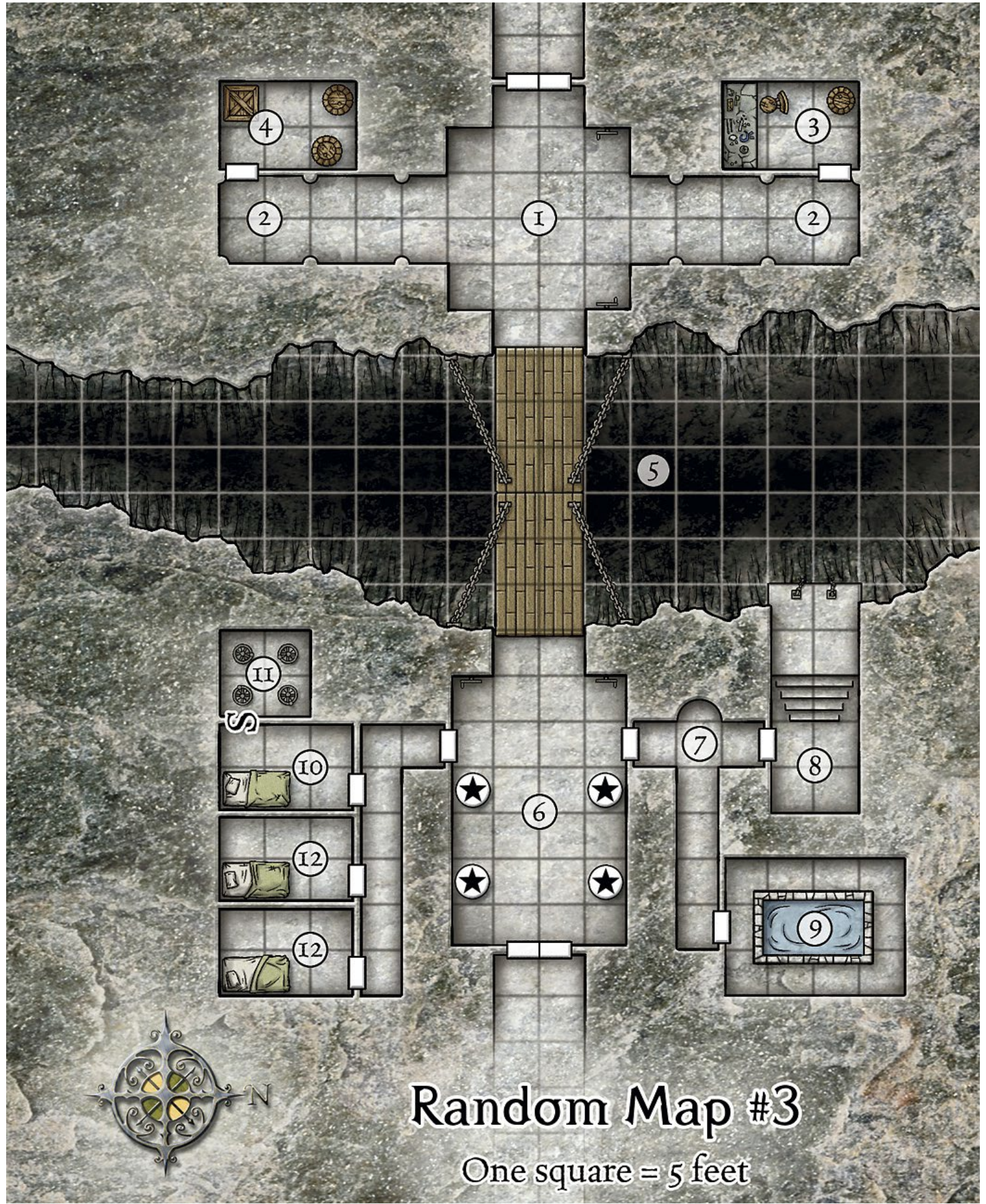
**BARRIERS, OBSTACLES,
AND HAZARDS**









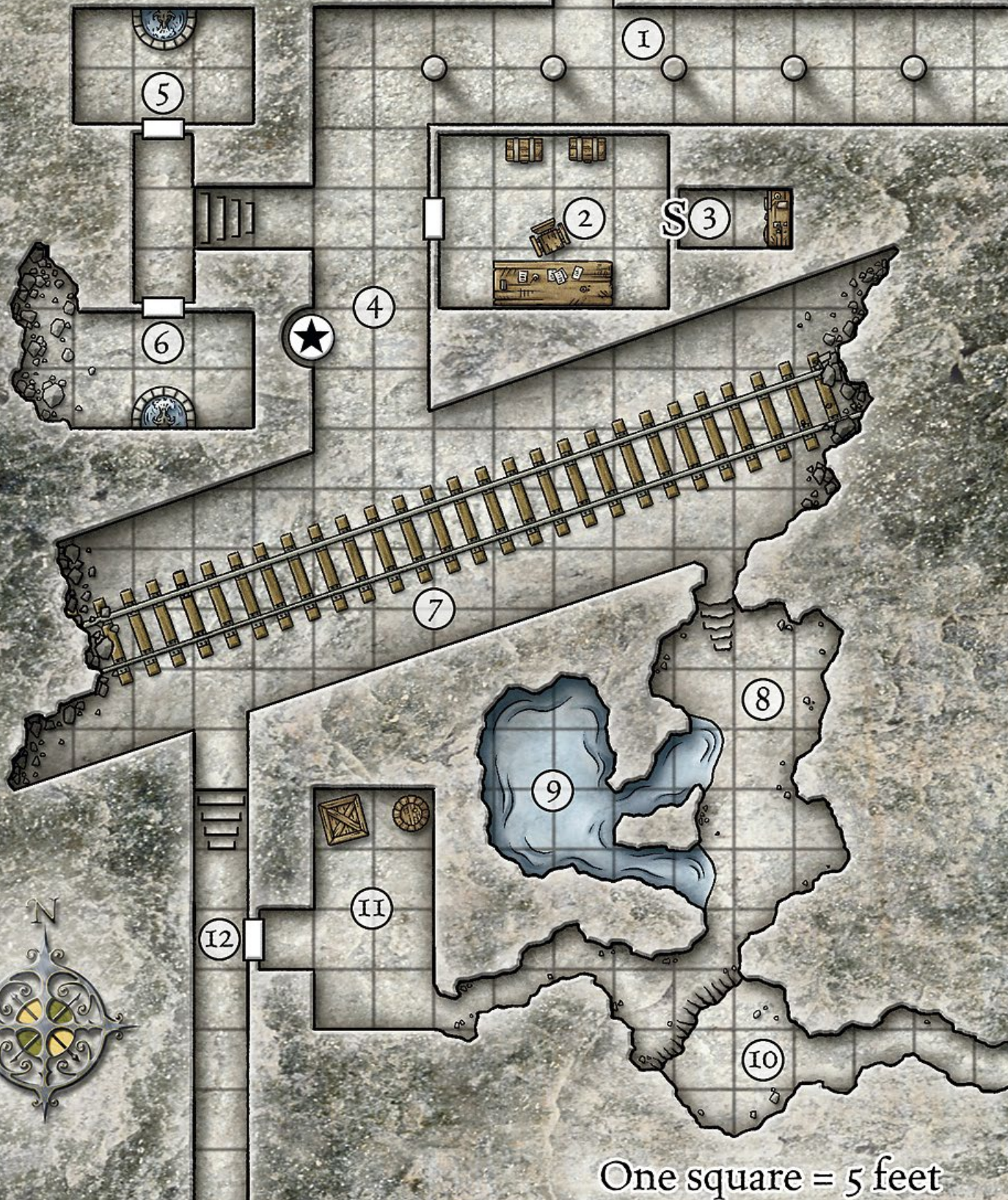


Random Map #3

One square = 5 feet



Random Map #2



One square = 5 feet



Creature Feature: Ikororia's Mutating Monsters

Magic: The Gathering adds metamorphosing creatures as we stat up Snapdax, Apex of the Hunt for fifth edition D&D.

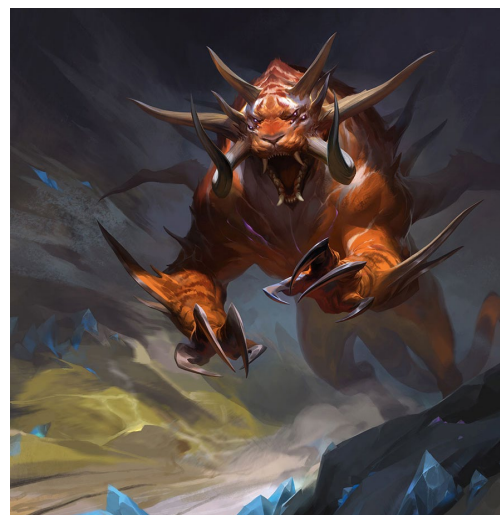
Oz Mills



On the treacherous world of Ikororia, gargantuan beasts fight each other for survival in a land where humans sit at the bottom of the food chain. *Ikororia: Lair of Behemoths*, the latest set of cards for

Magic: The Gathering, isn't simply packed with huge, kaiju-like creatures, it also allows players to build their own monstrosities.

Ikorias's wildlife, it turns out, is evolutionarily aggressive. If a creature doesn't already have the advantage in an encounter it might grow a new body part to gain the upper hand—sometimes quite literally! This adaptability creates more mutants than an *X-Men* movie as these creatures stretch their genetic boundaries, changing their size and even developing new abilities.



Your browser can't play this video.

[Learn more](#)

A fifth edition party of adventurers may encounter a creature which has already mutated, so Snapdax might hunt them in the form supplied below. Or they may stumble upon a non-human creature (an important distinction on the *Magic: The Gathering* card) which changes before their very eyes.

The ability to mutate unlocks incredible potential in even the smallest of creatures and a DM could build Snapdax's mutation into the description of an encounter with a much weaker creature. For that reason the mutation power has been left off the stat block provided here.

Adventurers should also be wary of further changes. A creature might have transformed once already but Ikorias is home to countless others with the same ability and there's nothing to stop further mutations making Snapdax even more deadly than it already is!

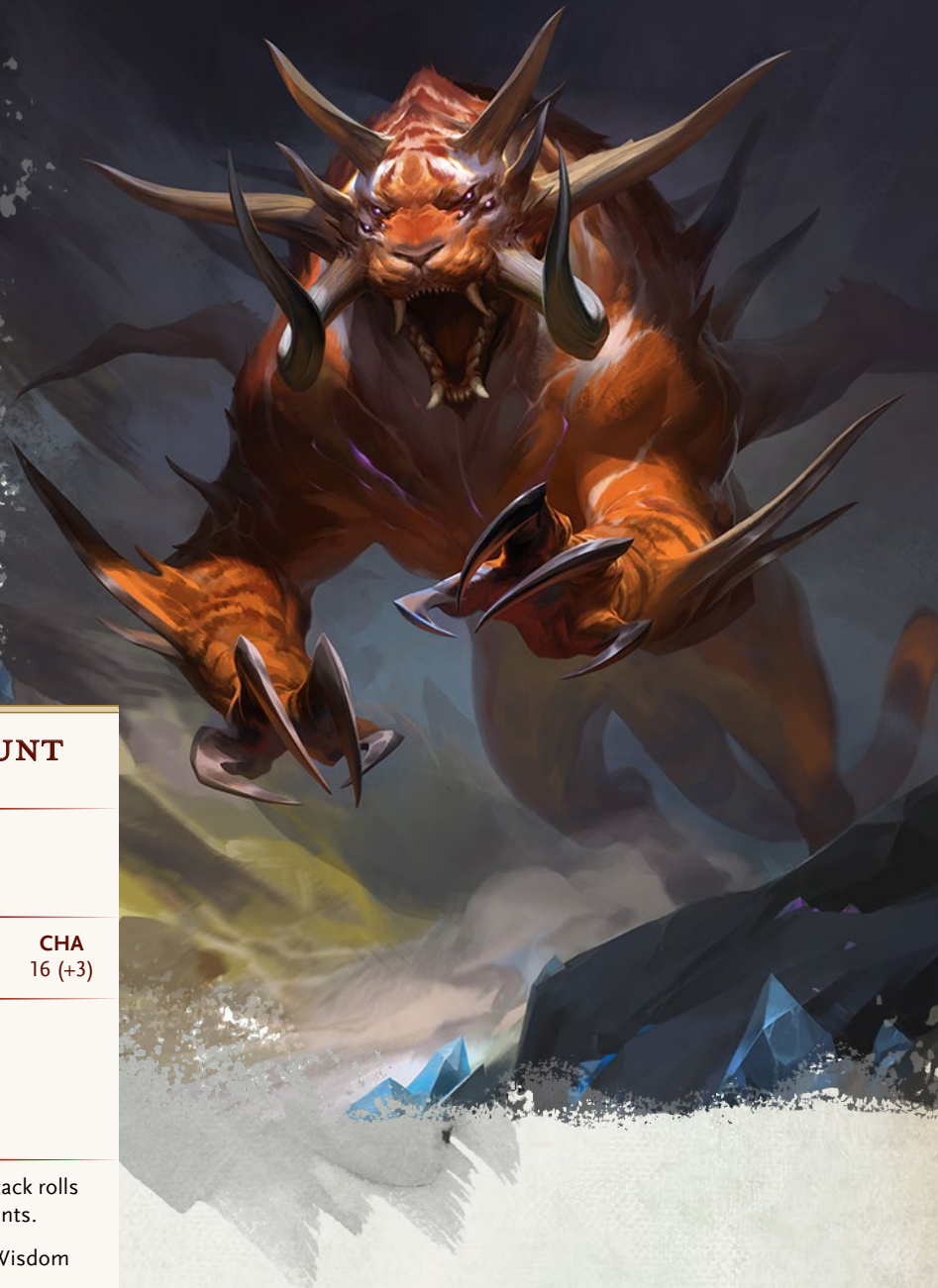
Access the fifth edition stat block for Snapdax, Apex of the Hunt by downloading the PDF.

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF NOW](#)

Check out the full menagerie of creatures available in *Ikorias: Lair of Behemoths* and play online for free at *Magic: The Gathering Arena*.



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SNAPDAX, APEX OF THE HUNT

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 186 (12d20 + 60)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	25 (+7)	20 (+5)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +13, Con +11, Wis +8

Skills Perception +14, Stealth +19

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages —

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Blood Frenzy. Snapdax has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Keen Sight and Smell. Snapdax has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If Snapdax fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Pounce. If Snapdax moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, Snapdax can make one claw attack against it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Snapdax makes three claw attacks, or it makes one claw attack and uses Mutation Helix.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (3d6 + 7) slashing damage.

Mutation Helix. Snapdax releases a coiling bolt of necrotic energy at one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Snapdax then gains temporary hit points equal to the amount of damage the target takes.

REACTIONS

Reactive Mutation. When Snapdax fails a saving throw or takes 30 or more damage in a single turn, it can use Mutation Helix and gain resistance to a damage type of its choice until the next time it uses Mutation Helix.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Snapdax can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Snapdax regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Claw Attack. Snapdax makes a claw attack.

Daunting Roar. Snapdax can let out an especially menacing roar. Each creature of its choice within 60 feet of it that can hear it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of Snapdax until the end of the creature's next turn.

Nightmare Prowl. Snapdax moves up to half its speed. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.



Dndspeak d100 list: Gargantuan Monsters

Break out two d10 and inject a colossal threat into your game thanks to our massive list of massive beasts.

Casey Willis

“The ground shakes. The horses pulling your wagon whinny and stretch against their bridles. You hear a terrible noise as something ahead of you is ripped from the ground and then a mighty crash as it lands in front of you. Someone please roll me a d100.”

In honor of the larger-than-life monsters that are terrorizing the pages of this issue we asked Casey Willis of [Dndspeak](#) to create a list of one hundred creatures that can randomly do the same for your tabletop games. If you enjoy the list below check out the [Monster section](#) of the Dndspeak website, which includes such genius inventories as [100 Tarrasque Characters to Include in Your Game](#).

Dndspeak’s lists are usually created by the [d100 Reddit Community](#) and DMs and players can head there to request a specific category.

The Living Mountain: What happens when a cache of very powerful magic items is placed into a tomb and forgotten? Their magic begins seeping into the earth, causing the very stone to come to life. The only way to stop this mountain in its massive humanoid form is to traverse the dungeon inside its body and remove the magic items.

Y’uum, The Ever Growing: This mile-long collection of spores and mold travels slowly across the landscape. Food and plant life instantly wilt and go bad when Y’uum is near. If Y’uum comes into contact with a living creature it slowly burrows into its skin, eating it from the inside out.

Nimir of the Ruinous Oblivion: A massive, nearly invisible figure draped in long, disgusting cloth. Nimir is the demon who oversees the creation of wraiths, descending to the ethereal plane to infuse a soul with a massive rush of negative energy. Anyone looking directly upon Nimir will feel they are looking at a mirage.

Shuggdus: This gargantuan, monstrous-looking, water-based creature is completely blind but has very powerful hearing, especially underwater. The Shuggdus moves along on tentacles instead of legs, relying on touch and sound to get around.

Yazothle: A formless blob that consumes everything in its path and gains the knowledge of anything it eats. The souls of the eaten can sometimes be seen trying to escape the creature's ooze-like body, to no avail. Whatever this creature consumes increases its size.

The Dreaming Maw: A castle-sized crystal floats above the ground, every so often pulsing red. Its lower half gives way to a mess of tentacles, some hundreds of meters long, which twist and writhe ceaselessly. It moves slowly, inexorably, for reasons unknown, and as it passes over territory the ground below warps. First the land gains a slimy texture, then it sprouts tentacles, eyes, mouths, and arms, until all that's left are squirming fields of flesh. Corrupted life occasionally emerges from these places: floating orbs of sinew and eyes; nearly normal creatures with grotesquely large features;

fragments of stone which sprout tentacles; and many other forms.

The Bickering Hydra: This creature began life as seven royal sisters who constantly argued with each other, even as their kingdom fell apart under the threat of invading armies of monsters. Their bloodline was cursed and the heads of these princesses now sit on the seven serpentine necks of a giant hydra-like monster, forced to share the same body and unable to escape each other's presence. They wander the ruins of their kingdom, which is filled with twisted, chimeric monsters.

Gar-Khoza: This gargantuan beast is actually quite passive and usually avoids the living, only feeding on corpses and dead plant matter. It resembles a giant amalgam of body parts from various creatures, formed into a vaguely humanoid shape. As an entity of rot, it exhales and is surrounded by a necrotic mist. Some animals choose to make their home inside it and it is often encountered surrounded by a swarm of insects and with a vulture perched on its back. Gar-Khoza shambles around aimlessly, leaving a trail of harmless, albeit alien, fungi and bugs in its wake. It's known to defend itself violently if the need arises.

Gzgeth, The Wandering Maw: This bulbous abomination closely resembles a starfish, with long arms that extend out and thousands of tube feet that propel it forward. A huge radial maw containing layer upon layer of teeth sits on the top of its body and its arms continually drop things into this mouth. The stench emitted by the decomposing matter within is indescribable.

Borovoi: A towering creature made up of long, thin limbs, Borovoi hides among the trees, taking the appearance of the forest it inhabits. Preferring the flesh of apex predators, it attracts woodland creatures to serve as bait. These creatures are kept docile and unaware, luring the hunters in to become the prey.

Aspect of Fenris: The shadow of a giant dire wolf of the apocalypse. It is said that the howl of this creature blots out the sun and shakes the earth.

The Clone Worm: A cosmically large worm hundreds of millions of kilometers across, consisting of the warped and deformed bodies of countless assimilated civilizations. The worm senses and is attracted to the formation of empty husk bodies, like those formed by the *clone*. If it draws close enough to be seen twisting and turning in the sky, any creatures who were created through cloning or copied in other ways become deformed and warped beyond recognition—sometimes huge and bloated and other times spindly and stick-like. The same outcome also affects creatures who have been reincarnated or resurrected, as well as those who have recently used teleportation magic.

Seklitlosri, The Black Tear: Seklitlosri is a massive winged toad with tentacles on her head, which she uses to bring prey into a mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth. She has amassed a group of toad-like

followers who collect her tears in urns. Any living creature that drinks from water polluted with this substance mutates into a similar toad-like creature.

The Vrenblook: A gargantuan monster consisting of nothing but murderous eyes, hundreds of long spiny arms, and a gigantic mouth. It disguises its grotesque body as a cloud and uses its hiding place in the sky to reach down with its long arms and pick up unsuspecting prey. One problem with its disguise is that it can often appear closer to the ground than most other clouds.

Crealeth: A hulking monstrosity that waits in the darkest depths, the Crealeth is a large whale-like creature covered with pustule abrasions that constantly leak a black tar. A row of blind eyes wrap around its large dome-like head, sitting above an exposed maw of needle-like teeth that stand as tall as a human. It serves as a fleshy transport for the vile creations of the aboleth, carrying their oozing and decaying armies in its stomach.

Tagrabui, the Rotten Being of the Marsh: A gargantuan, half-decomposing bear with sloth-like front legs, blind eyes, and moss growing on its back. Drool drips from its ever-open maw as it hungers for the sun, which it believes it is destined to devour when the time is right. Other creatures in its presence feel as if they are drowning and objects near it act as if they were underwater. Certain swampland tribes worship Tagrabui as a god of death and rebirth.

Cavestep, The Hill Titan: Thought to be creatures of legend, hill titans often rest only a few hours from any town. They resemble a hill giant in appearance, but are much bigger. The back of a hill titan might be covered with rocky outcroppings or trees, as when they awaken and rise from the earth, they carry everything with them that was above.

Graveteeth: This graveyard golem is the result of a necromancy spell gone horribly wrong. Instead of resurrecting a single corpse, this spell was subject to a massive boost of power and ended up resurrecting the graveyard itself. Made of rotted limbs and tombstones, this shambling creature can be smelled long before it can be seen.

Drak'Munshoo, Eater of Stars: This ancient lunar dragon resides on the dark side of the nearest moon. When the moon is full, its iridescent scales light up and it shoots across the sky, feeding on smaller stars. What is commonly mistaken for a shooting star is actually the lunar dragon flitting across the night sky, its belly full of food.

The Herder: This massive worm takes residence in temperate mountains and spends just as much time above ground as below. It's primarily a herbivore, swallowing small wooded areas to satiate its appetite. The Herder has a protective fascination for the goats of its

mountains and if any harm comes to them, the worm will do everything within its power to destroy the attacker.

Turukto: Thought to be a gift from a god of nature, these crane-like birds stand almost 120 feet tall. Their tree-like legs sprout orange fruits that taste of bittersweet honey. They mainly act passive when other creatures are near, and anyone daring to climb all the way up to their wooden bodies is rewarded with an excellent view.

Berchtois: This enormous cannon is surrounded by the living flesh of a tormented siege beast which relies on the tube to act as its spine. It controls the cannon directly with its brain and fires highly destructive bolts of demonic lightning.

Roga'th the Unmoving: Legends tell of a massive statue that appears to sit praying near a holy site. Many are drawn to this figure, keen to investigate, in the hopes it is a gift from their deity. They are actually being lured to their deaths, as Roga'th smashes its hands down on any who come near. This statue has appeared on almost every continent, causing scholars to debate whether it travels magically or whether there are more than one of them.

Skylla: A gargantuan creature that lives near coastal towns and resembles a hydra. Its six heads can pluck the unfortunate crew from any ship that comes too close and devour the sailors.

Nüthmetaya: A gargantuan snake, the size of twenty men across and easily two-hundred feet long. Despite the many destructive myths based on this beast it is strangely passive, preferring instead to feed on tiny organisms in the waters it swims through. It lives underwater for most of its life but must surface once every seventy years or so for one week to refill its massive lungs. It possesses immense psychic abilities, which can be used to communicate with others or to defend itself on the rare occasions something chooses to threaten it.

Totoma, the Golden Calamity: Totoma stands 30 feet tall and at least 50 feet long and has a mixture of draconic and feline features. Its face is an elongated cat's face, with swept back ears, long whiskers, and intelligent, amber eyes. A pair of white bone antlers rise from the back of its skull. The elongated body is covered in golden scales that appear to shimmer with a blackness, similar to the shifting spots on a leopard. Around its neck the scales are much larger and longer, giving the appearance of a mane of golden blades. Each of its four legs end in massive paws with wicked, hooked claws.

Akuma, Beast of the Dark: A giant bear that sleeps within the forest and protects the environment from harm. Those that dare to enter Akuma's domain and try to harm it must pray that he doesn't find them, as he feeds the interlopers he manages to kill to his forest friends.

The Skeletal Titan: This creature is made from the skeletal remains of long dead immortals who fell in battle, be they titans, fiends or celestials. Only the most powerful of necromancers can reanimate these remains, which can be programmed to act as siege weapons.

K'lyfrd the Red: A giant, red hound that wanders the land. Not particularly hostile, if a party of adventurers is welcoming and attempts to befriend it, K'lyfrd may join them.

Kwoptarr: This massive frog is usually found living in a hollow tree in a swamp. Kwoptarr loves to learn and will often ask those he encounters to tell him a riddle he hasn't heard before. His spittle is a powerful poison and he has been known to bestow it as a gift to those who befriend him.

Charybdis: Charybdis looks like a hideous bladder and twice per day gulps up an enormous amount of water from the sea, creating maelstroms that devastate ships which come too close. Old sea tales claim Charybdis is the organ of an ancient sea deity that has long since been slain.

Vegoreth: This massive bison roams the great planes and prairies. Vegoreth traditionally travels with a herd of bison who look to him for protection but is so massive he is often mistaken for a large hill.

The Nameless Tunneler: Drow, svirfneblin, and duergar mythologies all reference a creature which was first encountered when exploring the deepest parts of the Underdark. Something truly massive lives down there, and explorers talk of gigantic walls of undulating gray-green flesh filling tunnels hundreds of feet across, slowly creating new tunnels using acidic slime before expanding to fill the space. No head or tail has ever been found so it's not known if this is one creature or many but its current known locations are hundreds of miles apart. Massive, hideous parasites that resemble flat ticks occasionally attack curious observers, making more detailed studies difficult.

The Mithril Defender: A two-headed construct created using a ludicrous amount of mithril and multiple uses of the *wish* spell, the Mithril Defender might have been the most devastating weapon ever created, save for one flaw. The construct's two heads are completely independent of one another, leading to it being easily disoriented.

The Ruinbringer: Legends say this creature comes from the outer planes, while others say it's a twisted form of fiend. Whatever it is, one thing is certain: anything that crosses the path of this dragon-like monstrosity faces annihilation.

Black Cloud of Death: These dreadful creatures are incredibly

powerful, sentient, monsoon-like beings that appear as thunderclouds with occasional flares of red lightning. They are usually encountered in warm deserts and can move contrary to the course dictated by the wind if it suits them. The winds that precede them echo with thunder and carry particles of soot and ash, darkening the air and the ground as they approach.

Arachnarok: Of the many spiders that infest the world, the gargantuan Arachnarok is the largest of them all. Despite being bigger than a townhouse, it is a silent predator. Often found within the depths of a forest, this eight-legged monstrosity can stalk and entrap entire herds of wildlife and larger individual prey such as giants. After capturing creatures with its rope-like web and paralyzing venom, it drinks the liquefied innards of its still-living victims.

Iceberooze: This gargantuan ooze is often mistaken for the huge icebergs that detach themselves from the ice continent. Ships that collide with this creature may be surrounded and absorbed without a trace. Adventurers who engage with an iceberooze often find too late that cutting the creature simply makes it divide, and the best way to kill it is to use powerful fire magic.

Jörmungandr: Also known as the world serpent, Jörmungandr's scales extend to the far reaches of each continent as he slumbers within the ocean. Much of his body is often mistaken for mountain ranges and when he shifts in his sleep continents quake. Try not to wake him.

Ardenvot: Nobody knows what it is or where it came from but Ardenvot wanders the world, very slowly, killing anything it happens across. It has no destination or objective as far as anyone can tell yet it does appear to travel in strange patterns: zig-zagging, moving in a circle before spiraling to the center, or going back and forth across seemingly random areas. Sometimes it repeats the patterns and other times it ceases them to travel randomly in a new direction. The base of its body is a series of hexagonal prisms made of an incredibly tough, dull-grey metal, forming a larger hexagon.

The Brain of Elder Gods: This giant, pink brain shuffles along on the mass of tentacles attached to it. After taking a significant amount of damage from an attacker, it reveals a mouth with jagged teeth and a heart at its center. This creature is always at odds with the Eater of Worlds (see #49).

Kalkurruka, The Scream from the Stars: Most describe this creature as the worm that came from the night sky, although there are no obvious signs of how it manages to fly. It is entirely covered in mirror-like bladed scales, from the tip of its tail all the way to a circular mouth that leads to endless rows of teeth of the same material. It has no visible eyes, ears, nose or limbs. Its scales vibrate a harsh clanging, chittering sound wherever it goes, like a million screams floating by. It will occasionally descend to the ground to devour larger plant or animal life in its path, sometimes shedding scales as it regrows new ones. Anyone who cuts themselves on one of those shed scales may be afflicted with a curse and suffer a slow transformation, becoming a hybrid creature with mirror scales and only a circular mouth for a head. Kalkurruka and its hybrids seem to

be searching for something on this plane, though no one is certain of what.

Black Pudding Lake: This gigantic puddle of black ooze slowly creeps along absorbing anything in its path. The dark mass easily regains any lost material by consuming everything it dissolves. If it creeps through a city, it causes mass destruction, as it eats away at the foundations of buildings in its path and topples those structures.

Animated Temple: An adventuring party entering this seemingly unguarded temple may easily reach the center where an artifact awaits. If they decide to take it, they begin to feel tremors as the structure shakes around them. As they try to make their way out, they notice that the world appears to be moving. If they manage to exit the temple, they will see that the building itself is alive and mobile, and it wants its heart back.

The Yawning Chasm: This large canyon is, in essence, a giant mouth. Digging into its walls reveals treasures and trash absorbed by the canyon over millennia. Every 100 years it closes its mouth, staying sealed for one year and leaving only a barren, thin stretch of dirt where its lips once were. When it finally begins to open again, it loudly echoes a day-long, droning sound from which it gets its name.

Reefback Leviathan: These colossal, whale-like creatures are often

mistaken for moving islands in the oceans. Their backs are entirely covered with coral reefs and embedded shipwrecks. Despite their impressive size, they are a prey species for much larger leviathans.

Jorrenfilg: First seen as a cloud of dark fog stretching miles across. Somewhere in that cloud is Jorrenfilg, once a beloved queen, now a twenty-feet-tall, gaunt terror. Her skin is bronze—both in color and material—and a dozen silver serpents bearing fangs stretch along her arms, able to extend and attack anyone who comes near.

The Meta-Inevitable: Built from clockwork parts on Mechanus, this titanic half modron, half titan shakes the world with its vibrations as it walks the planes.

Eater of Worlds: This giant, brown worm, which has eyes running down its entire body, feeds on sin and corruption. As it splits into smaller worms when pierced or slashed it is not easy to destroy. Always at odds with the Brain of Cthulhu (see #41).

Hammerclaw: This vast crustacean usually hunts larger sea-going creatures and vessels, taking down prey as large as whales and major ships. Resembling a massive crab with two sets of claws, it sometimes also attacks coastal settlements, especially if it is feeling territorial.

Kylix, the Cloud Spider: This colossal, silver arachnid hangs from a web of altocumulus clouds past the edge of the world, constantly spinning wispy clouds from the water vapor in the air and feeding them to the wind.

Quercus, The Living Ecosystem: The branches of this gigantic treant are full of life. Usually found resting sleepily in the middle of a dense forest, the birds and animals who make their home within this oak tree will defend him with their lives.

Garrus, The Stone Watcher: This giant earth elemental has melded his body into a mountain, leaving only his face showing in order to watch over the nearby environment. Although his facial features can be seen by perceptive passersby, most believe Garrus is merely an unusual rock formation.

Sidderous, the Malevolent Moon: Once a powerful demon, Sidderous was tossed into orbit by a god and crushed by gigantic meteorites, forming a small moon. The moon still contains the demon's essence, allowing them to blight the world below.

Hoydecko: A stoic, wraith-like creature that stands unmoving. Hoydecko's masked face is parallel to the mountains on the horizon, and items pass through its almost transparent body unharmed. Often mistaken for an illusion, the echoes of Hoydecko's gentle breathing are proof it is alive. Having stood longer than the oldest tribes it features in many myths and prophecies but its true purpose is unknown.

Queen Oryst: Myths tell of a dwarf cursed by an experimental potion who grew to immense size over thousands of years. Her beard is like a grey forest and her spear is as tall as a mountain. She is wise and peaceful but has no time for elves and reacts violently to drow.

Teref-zanab, The Many Wormed: A writhing mass of worms, its million appendages gather information and food for the large, unknowable central body that lives below the land.

Kroll, The Many-Scaled One: Kroll is the byproduct of a union which took place eons ago between an ancient goddess and a monster. This giant chimera with the head of a snake, the body of a lizard, and the tail of a fish is usually encountered at the coast and does not like its solitary life to be disturbed. It also doesn't like to be hungry. And it is always hungry.

The Wandering Island: At first glance this appears to be an

undiscovered island. However, tales of its location constantly change among sailors. Some claim to have stepped foot on the island only for it to submerge into the sea, while others claim to have seen it appear out of the water. Further investigation may reveal that it is a gigantic turtle, wandering the ocean.

Kletterhaus: This sentient wizard's mansion uses six lengthy limbs of living wood to walk and climb. When its master is away, it feeds by lowering its basement chamber onto the tops of trees, opening wide its cellar doors, and then biting them off. It runs from fire but will defend itself against persistent pursuers. If damaged its legs regrow, albeit slowly.

Unz Bak: Named poetically from an old orcish dialect (meaning “large ball”), these coast-dwelling beasts are a mix of reptile and mammal. Covered in thick, flexible plates, they can be found squatting in ocean shallows, heads rooting around for submerged food on the sandy floor. When a herd has exhausted a stretch of coast, they move to solid land, bite their tails, and roll towards the next stretch. Unz bak are prized for their armor plates and man-sized eggs, which are often deposited close to shore. Keeping track of their movements is also key for coastal fishing towns as large shoals of fish usually follow in the wake of these bottom feeders. While they are fairly docile, some orc warbands have trained Unz Bak for battle—albeit crudely.

Cloud Drifter: Cloud Drifters are translucent sacks of organs bound inside an oily, bubble-like membrane. Gossamer filaments drift behind them on the winds as they traverse the skies, catching stray

material and food particles. The one fully opaque part of a cloud drifter is its beak—a metallic, serrated cone between eight to twelve feet long that can thrust downward to rip the flesh from any creature that manages to ascend to the cloud drifter’s altitude. Since they react poorly to changes in air pressure, every part of a cloud drifter except for their beaks disintegrates before reaching the ground, making it hard to prove their existence.

Trappercaps: These chitinous monstrosities have twelve gnarled legs supporting a fleshy structure not unlike a mushroom cap. Thirty feet in diameter, a trappercap has no discernible eyes or head, although the top of its cap is studded with mouth-like orifices. Each orifice contains a hook-tipped tentacle used for hunting prey. They appear to sense primarily through smell, touch, and vibration. Trappercaps lie dormant for weeks, legs burrowed into the ground, letting foliage, debris, soil or snow cover their tentacles until something steps on one, at which point the offended tentacle plows upwards, hooks the unfortunate prey, and retreats back into its corresponding mouth. When overwhelmed with multiple sources of prey, the trappercap bursts from the ground and begins an indiscriminate, frenzied feast, before relocating at high speed.

Daruur Adag: This massive creature is often mistaken for several landmotes drifting through the sky. In actuality, this sky octopus clings to a collection of these floating pieces of land and the carcasses of sky whales. While normally docile, it does occasionally release a stream of flammable gas to adjust its buoyancy.

Heke: This massive roc is three times the size of an average roc and

traditionally feeds off large herding animals.

Killith: This giant, six-legged, two-tailed crocodile traditionally stalks swamp-like areas (think dragon-crocodile Tharagavverug in Lord Dunsany's novel *The Fortress Unvanquishable, Save for Sacnoth*). Tribes residing near Killith are rumored to dump a portion of their food into the swamp every night to appease it.

Galia: The mother of all dryads comes from a forest in the Feywild and is said to be anywhere between one hundred and three hundred feet tall. Galia is lawful in nature and will only appear to those she wishes to engage with. If she dies, she is reborn from her old body.

Oarthen, The Old: Oarthen is the very first elephant, placed on this planet as a protector of humankind. Tasked to watch over the land, he will attempt to destroy anything that might cause harm to it.

The Cadaver Colossus: This truly gruesome creation is a flesh golem assembled using hundreds of corpses. It is believed that a group of seven necromancers are necessary to conduct the awakening ritual to animate such a massive body of dead flesh.

Cliffracer: These bird-like creatures have a wingspan of close to thirty feet and a long vertical sail along their spines. Cliffracers usually live in large caves near the ocean and patiently wait for ships that they can raid to pass by.

Hemorgolix: This incredibly large, sentient clot of blood might be heard before it is seen, as it beats much like a giant heart. Its worshipers are constantly trying to summon it to the Material Plane.

Dragondie: Legend has it Dragondie was given its name by an adventurer who saw it take down a dragon. This massive dragonfly is thought to be as old as the world itself but its true origin is unknown.

Roots, the Shambling Mound: Left to grow for centuries, this creature's roots are thought to extend for hundreds of miles. It has lain dormant for an eternity but recently the ground near this massive tree has begun to shake. Is Roots about to awaken?

Elder Tempest: One of the most powerful elementals in existence, the Elder Tempest was born from dark clouds, rain, and thunder. It has bent the wind itself to form what appears to be the body of a massive feathered serpent (similar to a **couatl**) and can control storms large enough to bring entire cities crumbling down.

Giennu the World Owl: Friend to sylvan creatures, enemy to all others, this fifteen-feet-high fey owl will often swoop down on travelers walking the roads at night. Once snatched up, they are never to be seen again.

Agonath-Ra, the Chained Doom: Agonath-Ra is an evil wizard who has transformed himself into a tarrasque-like monstrosity in an attempt to lay waste to entire cities. Having been paralyzed but not killed, he now lies buried beneath a hill which has since become the site of a small town. While most of the citizens are unaware of the beast beneath, others have discovered the truth. They use tunnels to reach Agonath-Ra's body and harvest his organic material for magical purposes. These components can help them become more powerful but the price they pay is that they also become more monstrous in the process. Although Agonath-Ra quickly regenerates any damage caused by these mutilations, he is helpless to stop the torture, the occasional minor tremor his only response as he dreams of the day he might break free of his prison.

Garg-ANT-uan Ants: These massive ants are largely found in cliff formations in the desert. They are the size of horses, and their tunnels are said to reach the center of the earth. Dwarves revere them for their tunneling abilities but fear what they might awaken in the earth below.

Rusted One: This creature is a conglomerate of the rusty armor left behind in dungeons by adventurers who suffered a horrible fate. It can smell metal and immediately drags its clanging body through a dungeon to retrieve the fallen armor. Rumor has it that a dwarven cult wish to dig this massive creature out of the mountain and release it upon the earth.

Hellfang: This disgusting giant ratoften resides in the sewers underneath a major city, usually accompanied by hundreds of regular rats. Always on the hunt for fresh meat, some have claimed to see this giant rat reach up from the drains and grab people in broad daylight, dragging them down into the sewer.

Kalut, the Devourer: This titanic, locust-like fiend is a master of decay and any organic material it touches will rot and wither. It can be seen walking around on two feet when not using its wings.

Corpseface: This gargantuan bioluminescent bat can usually be found in deep caves and normally comes out at night to feed. Its body glows a bright neon green due to the millions of microorganisms flowing within its bloodstream. It is believed its name comes from its gruesome appearance after it feeds.

Colossal Apes: These immense apes are incredibly dangerous and predatorial. Originally found on large, jungle islands, they will drive

away or kill any creature they fear might become bigger than them. Either there aren't many of these creatures still alive, or few travelers live to tell the tale of seeing one in person.

Abis, Lord of the Deep: The demon Abis takes the form of a massive nautilus. They lie dormant in an impossibly deep trench within the ocean, waiting for their worshippers to bring them the body of a kraken. Only once they feast on such a creature can they return to make the waters of the world run red with blood.

Shriek of the Caverns: This obnoxious creature usually hides away in crags and small caves but its shriek can be heard for miles. Up close it resembles a round, fat beetle, with an impossibly large maw where its face should be. Those who linger too near may begin to feel their bones crumble from the pressure of its unearthly screech.

Gorefang: The dread lord of gargoyles and other statues usually resides in a great gothic city, perched upon a massive cathedral. Its army of stone minions come alive at night, waiting to feast on travelers foolish enough to spend too long in the crumbling habitat.

Pale Strider: One gigantic, lithe limb attached to a massive clawed foot extends from the foggy mist. Its flesh is human, albeit sickly white and translucent with a network of veins visible below. The ever-present, ethereal fog that obscures the creature's body causes

necrotic damage, although the strider itself is rarely hostile unless provoked.

Terror of the Sands: This creature resembles a massive desert scorpion and was brought to life by a sinister cult that perished when it could not contain it. It now wanders the sands and beyond looking for its next meal and can run incredibly quickly for a creature of its size.

Kobold Stack: It can be startling to encounter this twenty-four-foot-tall figure in a massive hooded robe. The effect of this imposing being is lessened considerably if an adventurer is able to work out that the single being is really ten kobolds standing on each other's shoulders (the kobold stack scoffs at **three halflings in a trenchcoat**, being considerably taller!). Shame they are so easily unbalanced and knocked over.

Gravegrub: These massive worm-like creatures usually feed on the rich source of corpses found in graveyards. Some less-scrupulous cleric orders now cash in on the phenomena, selling special adamantine caskets so the remains of your loved one won't be consumed.

Smiley: The human face of this creature, which otherwise resembles a huge snake, is stuck in a permanent grin. Often found in swamps,

survivors have reported seeing the human head smiling at them from below the murky water, moments before it strikes.

Loo'shin: Veteran sailors already have the sense to fear giant squid. Yet Loo'shin is one of the most feared creatures a ship can face on the open sea, as this giant squid loves to collect shipwrecks and bring them back to her lair.

Crystal Colossus: These towering, golem-like creatures have a crystal embedded within their chest that changes color to display their temperament. If you ever see a red crystal colossus, run as fast as you can!

Seaweed Giant: These aquatic giants can be encountered at any saltwater source, although they prefer the deeper bays found near a shore. Growing as large as thirty feet tall, they will often serve as protectors of coastal villages which provide them with extra seaweed to eat.

Arcane Jellyfish: Unlike the seafaring creatures they are based upon, these jellyfish are crafted from pure magic. A few have grown to the size of small towns and can be seen from miles away as they float aimlessly in the sky. If their long tentacles make contact with the ground, they cause a massive explosion of electrical energy.

Adamantine Shells: These gargantuan turtles were first found deep in the Underdark, gorging themselves on minerals and ore. The more the turtle eats, the more minerals are absorbed into its shell, making it ever stronger over time.

Pephellus, The Talking Forest: Long ago, a druid awakened one tree and blessed it with intelligence. As the roots of that tree spread throughout the forest its brethren also became sentient. Pephellus will often aid lost travelers and signal the correct route through its mass of trunks. However, it is quick to deal with those who would cause harm to members of its sentient family.

Rust Dragon: These massive creatures have been known to feed upon small mountains, trying to get to the delicious ore inside. Rust dragons also have an insatiable hunger for metallic weapons and armor, making them a very difficult foe to fight. Their gargantuan, rust-colored wings block can out the sun when they fly.

Giant Bees: Originating from deep within the Feywild, these bees were created by an ancient order of druids that sought to protect their domain. Unfortunately, they turned out to be bumbling and lazy. Fey rifts have allowed these creatures to make their way into other realms and while they are funny to look at and usually benign, they can be a dangerous foe if provoked (not to be confused with **animated armor that is full of bees**).

Abalone Wrasse: One of the first complex creatures ever to evolve, Abalone Wrasse began life as an alpha predator feeding in primordial seas. Originally resembling a nautilus, it has fed and grown to a point where it can use its massive size to overpower almost anything it encounters.

They are Sheyeoxks: This extra-dimensional being is the size of a solar system and its true form, spanning hundreds of dimensions, is impossible to conceive. It travels by creating wormholes to tunnel through the universe one dimension at a time.

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D&D Classics: Battlefields

This issue we consider the chaos of pitched battlefields as well as the stalwart defense of fortified castles in military campaigns.

ADVENTURE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Planning an adventure on the battlefield and looking for inspirational scenes? Thankfully, no end of examples exist across historical medieval or fantasy media, whether in such classics as *Braveheart*'s Battle of Stirling Bridge, *Gladiator*'s Battle of Vindobona, *Lord of the Rings*' Battle of Helm's Deep, or *Game of Thrones*' Battle of the Bastards.

While mass battles can make for truly epic, climatic encounters, the mere background of war can be used to provide adventurers with smaller, more personal encounters. As discussed by Jeremy Crawford on our *Dragon+* livestream, this might include rescuing a prisoner from behind enemy lines, spying out enemy positions, or what to do when the siege tunnel you're digging suddenly breaks through into the enemy's position!

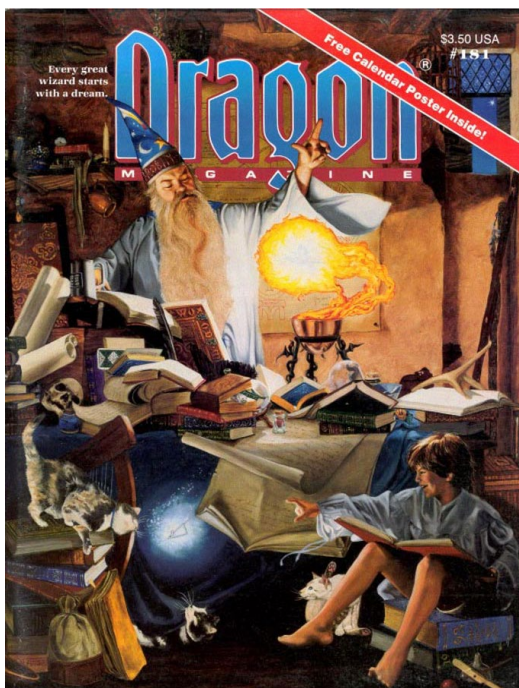


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To inspire your game, you might also consider more modern warfare, such as *Avengers: Infinity War*'s Battle of Wakanda, or *1917* (SPOILER: complete with rat-triggered booby traps). For an even deeper dive into WWI, including some truly terrifying and visceral accounts of battles that might factor into your own descriptions, there's Dan Carlin's *Hardcore History* podcast ("Blueprint for Armageddon" parts I-VI covers WWI specifically).

For this issue, we wanted to look at military explorations in the game through the following past articles and sources:



***Dragon* #181: Sorcery and Strategy**

Written by Thomas Kane (May 1992), this suggests new considerations for tactics when the battlefield is populated by wizards able to cast *fireball*, *wizard eye*, and *mass suggestion*!

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Heroes of Battle



Heroes of Battle (2005) states:
 “War campaigns can be as varied as traditional D&D campaigns.... Playing D&D within the war genre is essentially about moving the action from the dungeons, castles, and ruins of traditional D&D to the great battle scenes of fantasy novels and movies, where tens of thousands of men and monsters clash. Summarized as simply as possible, this is the book that brings the dungeon out onto the battlefield. The two environments have a lot in

common—most notably the presence of lethal foes who want to do in the characters—but major differences persist. Whether you’re a player or the DM, you’ll adjust your game to account for the difference in scale, pacing, movement, and motivation.”

Several chapters of this book are fairly mechanics-free and able to be applied to any campaign or edition. Let’s first peruse a few pages from Chapter 1: The War Campaign:

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Further advice from Chapter 2: Building Adventures:

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GREAT STONEY

With many schools remaining closed around the world, parents and caregivers at home with their kids may be in need of new projects to tackle. In *Dragon*+ 11 (our DIY issue), we looked back at



one of *Dragon* magazine's more famous papercraft projects—the magnificent castle, Great Stoney!

Presented below is a PDF of Great Stoney and its blueprints (in greater resolution than originally

offered), for you to print out and assemble:

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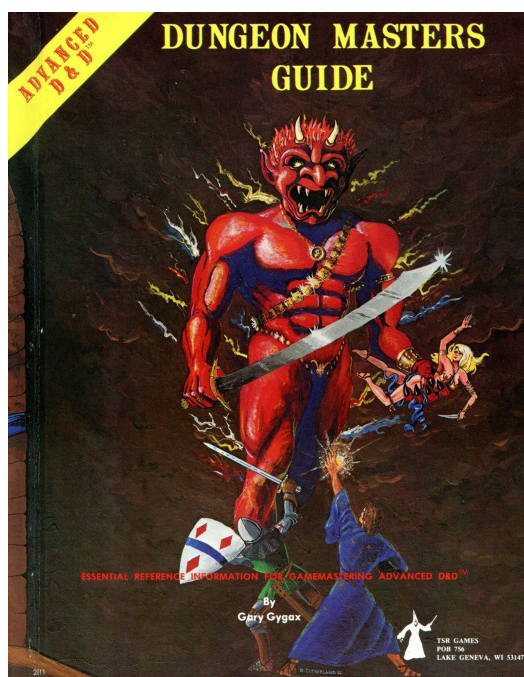
BEHIND STONE WALLS

In these days of self-isolation, we're staying safe at home as best we can. As it relates to military campaigns, we consider some of the safest homes within the game—namely fortresses, strongholds, and castles.

Dungeon Master's Guide

When it came to motivation for higher-level characters, the first edition *Player's Handbook* notes how many classes are eventually able to establish strongholds. Take the fighter, for instance:

When a fighter attains 9th level (Lord), he or she may opt to establish a freehold. This is done by building some type of castle



and clearing the area in a radius of 20 to 50 miles around the stronghold, making it free from all sorts of hostile creatures.

Whenever such a freehold is established and cleared, the fighter will:

1. Automatically attract a body of men-at-arms led by an above-average fighter. These men will serve as mercenaries so long as the fighter maintains his or her freehold and pays the men-at-arms; and
2. Collect a monthly revenue of 7 silver pieces for each and every inhabitant of the freehold due to trade, tariffs, and taxes.

Where can you find information on building such a stronghold? Here we turn to the *Dungeon Master's Guide*! As stated in the Construction and Siege chapter (excerpted below):

As Dungeon Master you will be interested in the subject of dungeon building for two reasons. Most important is the work which will take place in various underground settings you devise for your players. Work will probably be in progress prior to their venturing into the labyrinth, during the course of their adventures therein, and even after they have moved on to some other project or task. Later, high-level player characters will build their own strongholds, and they will desire some dungeon mazes thereunder.

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DRAGON MAGAZINE

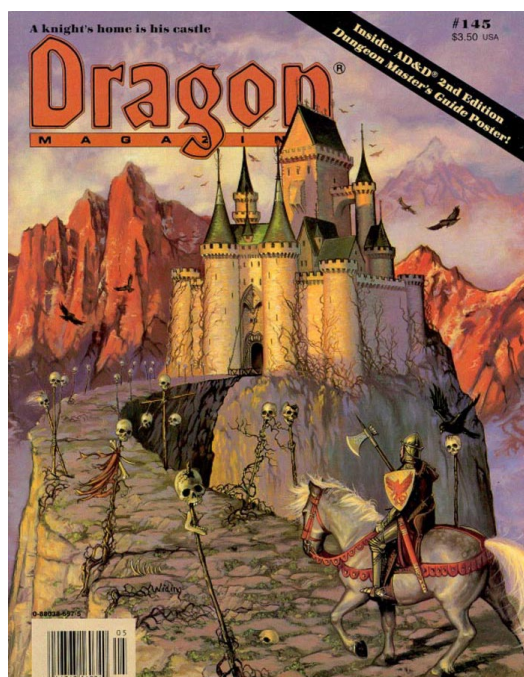
Unsurprisingly, a vast wealth of resources on the building and running of castles has been published throughout the years in *Dragon* magazines. Without exhausting this list, we present a few notable articles to help with the construction of your next castle:



Dragon #80: Who Lives in That Castle?

Building it is one thing, running it is another. Not just a primer on castles, Katharine Kerr's article offers great historical context and detail of medieval life.

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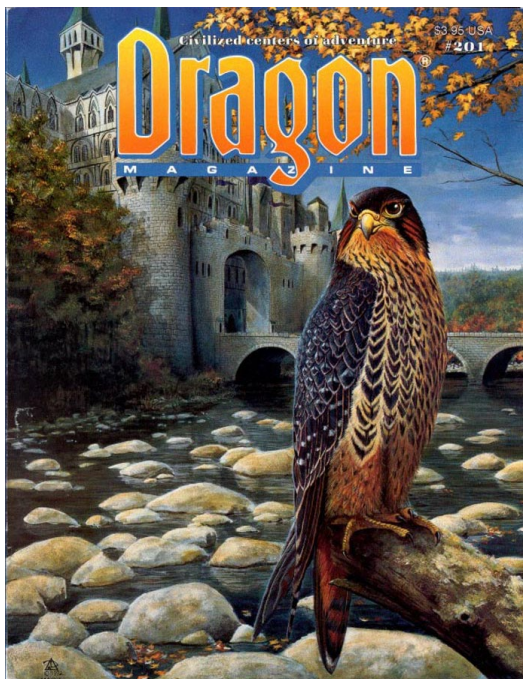


Dragon 145: Your Home is Your Castle

Patricia Cunningham-Reid reveals that there's more to castle-owning than meets the eye. This is another piece bursting with excellent historical detail, as well as terminology for the various elements of a castle and its defenses.

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Dragon 201: Seven Steps to a



Successful Castle

Richard Baker's guide to building a castle by the numbers includes an expansion of terms, as well as thoughtful strategic considerations and plans for constructing your own castle.

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Illustration by C. Lukacs

WHAT IS A BATTLEFIELD ADVENTURE?

With any campaign in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, game sessions work best when the adventures match the character and player types present in the party. Just as a party of druids and barbarians is less appropriate for a game of urban espionage, so too would a group of sorcerers and wizards be ill suited for a campaign that continually places them in front of charging cavalry.

War campaigns can be as varied as traditional D&D campaigns: Adventures can run the gamut from secret infiltrations of enemy camps to epic battles on the front line. Some players enjoy the opportunity to have their character lead a unit into battle, whereas others prefer to play with small groups of PCs in a more traditional adventuring party. As the DM, you should make an effort to know those tendencies and desires of your group, and tailor the campaign to suit.

With the “battlefield as dungeon” approach used in planning a war campaign, the DM needs new tools to keep track of events on the battlefield and help players realize how their characters can interact with this new environment.

Playing D&D within the war genre is essentially about moving the action from the dungeons, castles, and ruins of traditional D&D to the great battle scenes of fantasy novels and movies, where tens of thousands of men and monsters clash. Summarized as simply as possible, this is the book that brings the dungeon out onto the battlefield. The two environments have a lot in common—most notably the presence of lethal foes who want to do in the characters—but major differences persist. Whether you’re a player or the DM, you’ll adjust your game to account for the difference in scale, pacing, movement, and motivation.

The battles discussed in *Heroes of Battle* are no mere skirmishes. Thousands of soldiers on a side is the norm, and the characters probably see only part of the larger battle unfold before them. But the outcome of even the greatest battle often hinges on a smaller engagement. Can the player characters hold the bridge long enough for a relief column to arrive? Can they disrupt the enemy’s supplies behind the lines, then escape across no-man’s-land before the entire enemy army hunts them down? While the player characters are only a small part of an army, the role they play in a battle can be pivotal and heroic.

To use military jargon, battlefields are a “target-rich environment” for PCs. The monsters aren’t hiding behind locked doors and in mazelike corridors—they’re marching right toward you with malice in their eyes. In traditional D&D, characters can generally rest when they need to. But the battle rages on even if the beleaguered characters are low on spells, hit points, and other resources. Conversely, in a battlefield adventure you’re unlikely to run out of opponents. Brave and ambitious characters can almost always find a worthy enemy to fight on the battlefield.

The architecture of a site-based adventure slows the pacing of a D&D game, and it also constrains the PCs’ movement. If there’s a door to the north and another to the south, the characters will almost always take one of those two choices. But on a battlefield, characters can go where they like, although the enemy might have something to say about it (not to mention the PCs’ superior officers). DMs must be prepared for PCs who decide on a whim to seize a network of trenches to the east. But, by the same token, PCs must be prepared for threats that can come from any direction—everything from goblin sappers tunneling beneath their feet to a barrage of flaming catapult stones from the sky.

There are as many reasons to go to war as there are wars themselves. Some PCs will fight for king and country. Others will fight to protect their comrades. Some are fulfilling a lucrative military contract. On one hand, battlefield adventures can start from very prosaic motivations. The PCs attack the gnoll watchtower because the general ordered them to, not because the gnolls are guarding treasure or have kidnapped the mayor’s daughter. But on the other hand, sustaining a character’s motivation to stay in the army throughout a war means delving deeper into the DM’s bag of tricks than in a traditional D&D game. Treasure, experience, and plenty of action are still motivators, to be sure, but the PCs will also be bucking for promotions, earning decorations for heroism, and eventually shaping the outcomes of the larger war.

THINK BIG/PLAY SMALL

Roleplaying in a war setting sounds like a lot of fun. Who doesn’t enjoy watching great war movies such as *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Guns of Navarone*, and *The Dirty Dozen*? But turning the battlefield into a dungeon for your players takes more work than you might think.

By their very nature, wars are large affairs. Not even counting support personnel behind the lines who supply food and munitions, or medical personnel who care for the wounded after a conflict, a single battle can involve hundreds if not thousands or even tens of thousands of soldiers.

That’s not roleplaying. That’s wargaming.

And wars, by their nature, are political. They are fought over ideologies and resources; over religious beliefs and revenge; and, all too often, for economic expansion. But

even if the masses are sold lock, stock, and smoking barrel on the reasons, wars are still political battles fought by common folk for reasons too often known only to the leaders of those countries.

That’s not roleplaying either. It might make for a great game of *Diplomacy* or *Risk*, or a great Tom Clancy novel, but unless your players love political intrigue, it doesn’t make for a great game of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS*.

Think about those great war movies. They’re not about huge battles fought over geopolitical ideologies. They’re stories about small groups of well-trained people going on dangerous missions. They might have been ordered to go, but each person in the group usually has his or her reasons for taking the mission, whether it’s for greed or glory, advancement or adventure.

Now, that’s roleplaying at its finest.

The war becomes backdrop to a full-fledged adventure with great feats of heroism, tangible goals that group members can fully grasp, and one-on-one battles with life itself (and the success of the mission) hanging in the balance.

The war is there, ever-present in the lives of the characters. It impacts where they go and what they have to do when they get there. But the roleplaying experience becomes more about the mission—the adventure—than about the war. The war becomes the world or setting. The missions become the dungeon.

The trick to turning the battlefield into a dungeon is to think big but play small. The war can be ever-present in the daily lives of the PCs. They can see the impact it has in reports from the front lines, the sacrifices of the common people as supplies run short, and even the deaths of relatives or friends. But you as DM have to be the generals of both armies as well as the armies themselves. Never let a battle between the PCs and their army against an opposing army become nothing more than a two-day-long melee between hundreds or thousands of NPCs as your PCs watch helplessly waiting for their turn to come back around. Instead, their general tells the characters that he needs them to “take that hill at all costs,” thus turning a huge battle between thousands into a small battle between two manageable forces—the PCs against the dozen or two dozen foes who block their way to achieving their mission. The battle can rage on all around the PCs, but all you—and they—have to worry about is that one hill, that single goal.

Here’s another example of how to think big but play small. In a real war, the supply line is a primary concern for the generals. Whether soldiers are making incursions into enemy territory or are strewn out over a large area defending against multiple attacks, they need food and water. Plus, a large army needs other supplies, such as arrows, spell components, fresh horses, and fresh soldiers.

Feeding an army on the move is a logistical and bureaucratic nightmare—and incredibly boring. Most PCs won’t want to spend game time poring over supply requisitions. But that doesn’t mean you can’t make this important part of war part of your campaign.

The PCs might not care where the food is coming from or how it gets out to them in the field, but if you cut that supply line it becomes important pretty quickly when the food starts to run out. Now you have an adventure. The PCs can be sent out to stop raids on the supply line or to escort a caravan of food from HQ to a distant outpost. You can even turn it around and have the PCs try to cut the supply line of an invading force, thus leaving the enemy at a disadvantage.

Logistical problems can also give nonfighters something to do in your game. For example, characters with logistical or scrounging skills (such as Survival) or access to the spell *Leomund's billet* (see page 127) could have a chance to shine in an adventure about food shortages and cut supply lines.

The castle siege is another scenario in which you can take a large battle and turn it into a small adventure (or even a series of small adventures). While the battle rages all around them, the PCs could be tasked with guarding the gate, thus allowing you to focus on one small section of the battle. Later in this same scenario, perhaps after the gate falls and the army retreats into the main keep, you could send the PCs out a secret entrance on a mission to bring back reinforcements from an allied kingdom. The PCs will have to sneak, or fight, their way through enemy lines. They might even be pursued across the countryside as they race to find help in time.

Again, you have turned a large battle between massive armies into a small battle (or series of battles) between the PCs and manageable groups of enemies. Best of all, both of these scenarios allows the PCs to be the heroes. Their effort in these small skirmishes is the crucial factor between success and failure in the larger battle.

More scenario ideas are discussed in Chapter 2: Battle-field Adventures and Chapter 3: Battlefield Encounters.

PLAYER CHARACTER ROLES

In an epic conflict involving tens of thousands of soldiers, do the actions of a small group of heroes really matter? In the case of a group of PCs, and in the context of a war campaign, the answer should almost always be yes. The key to the answer is at what level the heroes have an effect.

An entire battle might not hinge on the actions of a few low-level PCs, but the survival of a unit of troops might. At 1st or 2nd level, the PCs might reorganize a separated unit and lead it to safety. They might bring down an ogre that is tearing through the front ranks. Exploits like these stand out from a typical soldier's actions, and should be recognized or rewarded by immediate commanders and the like. The actions are noticeable, but the outcome of the battle usually does not hinge on the fate of a single ogre.

Mid-level PCs have a greater chance of impacting an overall battle's success. Strike teams of characters might

disable an enemy's artillery, or lead a surge through a mass of enemies to rescue an isolated force, or ambush a key officer, providing their own army with a distinct advantage in the conflict. Mid-level PCs are also more likely to be in command positions, and to have a chance to successfully rally troops that have routed. The battle could be won or lost despite the PCs' actions, yet their accomplishments can be significant enough to be recognized by the commanders on both sides of the conflict.

As the PCs approach high levels, their deeds of valor (or secrecy) directly affect the outcome of a battle. They become the leaders of the armies, or at the very least are engaged in planning an upcoming confrontation. The PCs seek out the leaders of the opposing force to fight them directly, or provide great magic that turns the tide of battle. When the PCs are victorious, so is their army.

The actions of the PCs matter, but not always to the ultimate outcome of the battle. At low levels, what they do matters greatly to the soldiers whose lives they save, and the significance of their actions increases as they gain levels; high-level PCs are capable of helping to shape the battle itself. Regardless of the scale of the PCs' actions, the players should always be aware of the PCs' influence on the outcome.

PCS AND VULNERABILITY

PCs tend to think themselves invulnerable when faced with overwhelming numbers of low-level fodder. A 10th-level fighter with the Great Cleave feat might think that he is a match for any unit that consists of mere 1st-level kobold warriors. For the most part, however, an army should have better uses for a 10th-level fighter than to put him out on the front lines. If one side of a conflict has a 10th-level fighter, the other side likely has a trio of ogre barbarians that could likewise tear through a company of low-level warriors. A better tactical decision is to have the fighter defend against those ogres.

Even if the fighter insisted on taking out a battalion of enemies on his own, or with a group of heroes, the mass of enemies could still overwhelm him. Troops can use the aid another action to increase the chance of one soldier getting a hit, and there's always a chance that the fighter could get pinned or otherwise overcome.

There is a place for heroic melees against a horde of opponents. But if an entire army is easily decimated by the PCs, then that adventure is likely too weak a challenge.

PACING

In any game session, it is important to maintain the flow of the game and not bog down in dice rolling or rules minutiae. As a DM, there are some preparations you can make to ensure that a war campaign continues to move along at an acceptable pace.

When preparing for your game sessions, set up a battle plan, a timeline of events that will occur during the battle. Identify events such as when certain troops

begin moving, or in what round artillery will be fired; then, once the battle begins, you will already know what happens around the PCs. Make a timetable for the overall battle, including maneuvers for both sides involved, that shows how the battle will play out. Make a list of the events that will happen around the PCs: These are the encounters the PCs need to deal with directly. Make notes on how the PCs' success or failure will affect the larger battle, if at all.

For ranged attacks such as artillery or fireballs that might affect the party, you could roll damage dice ahead of time, noting it on the battle plan. Be judicious in your use of this tactic, so you don't attack the PC who has few hit points just because you know a low (or high) damage roll is coming up.

In some cases, you might want to determine beforehand the result of a conflict between two units. In such instances, you might decide how many rounds it takes for one unit to become victorious and how strong that unit remains once that small conflict is resolved. A unit might achieve victory by destroying the enemy unit, but it could also win by causing the foes to rout.

You can determine the victor by running the combat normally, or you might simply make an educated estimate, based on the strengths of the units involved. In a large battle with many units, you can use this method to determine how long the battle will last and who might ultimately be victorious, in the absence of any interaction by the PCs.

You can think of the battlefield as a dungeon that is in constant motion. Once you have determined what the battlefield will look like from hour to hour or round to round, then you have the ability to add the PCs into the mix at any location or point in time.

DESCRIBING THE ACTION

Try to illustrate the progress of the overall battle to the PCs. In a pitched

combat, take a moment at the beginning of a round to describe how other nearby units are faring, and mention when new threats present themselves. Less often, perhaps once every ten rounds of combat, give the PCs an idea of the larger scale by indicating whether their army seems to be winning (or losing), or at least if the battle is going to plan.

In some cases, you might have NPCs fighting other NPCs. If you want to have the dice decide the fate of these NPCs, perform the rolling beforehand so as not to slow down the game. If the PCs interfere with that scuffle, then resolve combat normally. If the PCs do not become directly involved, or if the levels or Hit Dice of the NPCs vary significantly from the average level of the party members, then describe the fight but keep the focus on the PCs.

Make sure to describe morale effects to the PCs. If the allies they are fighting beside become shaken, it should be obvious to the PCs that they could attempt to rally their comrades. Likewise, if they know that they have struck fear into the hearts of their enemies, they can be encouraged and know that at least a small victory might be near.

As always, pay attention to your players. If they are nodding off or losing interest, try to get those characters involved.

TACTICAL DOWNTIME

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* suggests that a typical party should be able to overcome four encounters before



Regdar and Mialec take a break from the rigors of the battlefield

needing to rest, heal, and regain spells. But in the middle of a pitched battle there's usually no good place to set up camp and pull out the spellbooks.

Between combats, the PCs should have an opportunity to heal themselves magically, or otherwise reload and prepare for the next encounter. An encounter that would generally be appropriate for the party's level becomes much more deadly if the party is nearly out of hit points or has an unconscious party member as a result of the previous fight. The time between combats need not be hours in length, just a minute or two to allow the party to catch its collective breath.

When planning the encounters, keep in mind that after four encounters in a given day, the spellcasters are likely out of spells, the barbarian cannot rage again, and the paladin has used all his smite attempts. Continuing on might be a challenge for the party, but it might not be much fun for the players.

Four encounters might not seem like much, but in the context of a larger battle this amount of activity can be significant. A set of four encounters might consist of, for example, taking control of a hill, defending it for some time, rescuing a commander in distress, and then performing a fighting withdrawal. With some tense and quiet intervals between those events, those four encounters could easily take a half-day of game time.

If you want to have more than four encounters, try making the Encounter Level of each encounter one or two levels lower than the party level. The encounters might seem a bit easy at first, but the addition of a few more encounters in a day tests the endurance of the party without making the encounters so overpowering that the party must rely on luck to succeed.

CAMPAIGN PLANNING

You will have to face a lot of issues when you begin a war campaign. This section will take a look at some of these issues and provide hints and insights into how to combat the most prevalent problems you are likely to encounter as your PCs go to war.

First, anyone who has ever played with a large group (say, eight or more PCs) knows that even a short melee can seem interminably long as players wait for their turns. Multiply that by a hundred or a thousand, and you can see one problem with gaming in a war scenario.

Second, in a war you have armies, and in armies you have ranks. What happens when the weakest player in the group suddenly outranks the rest of the PCs? Power struggles are a common part of roleplaying, but military ranks—which can be an enjoyable part of the war campaign—can also become a major headache.

Another factor to consider is treasure. When your PCs are in a dungeon, it's easy to drop a treasure chest in a room for them to find. But unless the NPCs on a battlefield are traveling in siege engines, they won't be carrying treasure for the PCs to find. So, how do you reward players for heroic deeds? More important, how do you make sure the

characters obtain equipment of sufficient value as they gain levels and fight tougher battles?

A dungeon is often close to a town or a city where the PCs can go to rest or buy supplies. Even in remote dungeons, the PCs can often find a room that has been cleared of enemies where they feel safe enough to bed down for the night. But in a war, the characters will often find themselves behind enemy lines with no possibility of getting a good night's rest, let alone meeting a friendly shopkeeper. So, strategic downtime becomes something you have to plan into a scenario to give the PCs a chance to rest and resupply.

Lastly, you will have to pay closer attention to the needs of the nonfighters in your group. Wars are all about heroic deeds and titanic battles. But after a night of constant melees, the rogues, druids, bards, and even rangers in your group might feel unfulfilled. To help those players get the most out of their characters, you need to give some thought to adventures off the battlefield.

DEALING WITH RANK AND ORDERS

In Chapter 4 you will find rules for adding military ranks to your war campaign, and for awarding medals and honors to worthy characters. While ranks and recognition are a cool way to reward good roleplaying, they do present a potential problem for the DM and the group.

Everyone has seen group dynamics ruined by an overbearing player who tries to take control of the group and gives orders that nobody wants to follow. And, if you've played D&D long enough, you've seen what happens when you have too many "generals" in the group. Everyone wants to give orders, but nobody wants to follow them.

Either situation can lead to bickering players, long discussions about who should open a door, sloppy melees that get characters killed, and, ultimately, hurt feelings within the group. Now add stratified ranks to an already fragile dynamic. It's hard enough to ignore the "paladin who would be king" when that character only has the power of his convictions. What happens when he outranks the other characters in the group?

The dynamic of each gaming group is going to be different, but most groups seem to work best when a pseudodemocratic leadership is present. One player will often dominate the decision-making, but if he or she regularly asks for advice and help, no other player in the group feels left out. Handing out ranks can destroy that dynamic, especially if the natural leader of the group is not the recipient of the promotion.

If there is a natural leader among the players, it might make sense to give that player's character the highest rank. The rest of the players are already used to following that player's lead when it comes to making decisions, so if the de facto leader is also the highest-ranking character in the group, there shouldn't be too much strife.

There are a couple of problems with this approach, however. First, not every group works well with a single leader giving all the commands, especially if the rest of

the players don't get a voice in the decisions. Most players dislike being led by the nose through an adventure by the DM but really detest being led by a dictatorial player, no matter how good that player's ideas might be. So you should probably avoid turning your de facto leader into the ranking leader unless that player leads by consensus instead of fiat.

The second problem with turning a single player into the group's leader is that the other players might view this decision as favoritism. This situation could lead to the very dissent you were trying to avoid. The players might even stop listening to the de facto leader out of resentment, thus ruining your plan of encouraging that player's leadership of the group.

So, what do you do? You want to use ranks and medals to reward your characters, but you want to avoid dissent in the group. One possible solution is to take your cue from old war movies again.

Rank is most important when a leader needs to give orders to a large group of soldiers who all must do roughly the same job. But in movies such as *The Guns of Navarone* or *The Dirty Dozen*, each member of the group is a specialist, brought along to do a particular job. Sure, someone is ostensibly in charge, but when it comes down to a question relating to his or her specialty, the specialist is the one calling the shots.

If you set up your PCs as a team of specialists, rank becomes much less important within the workings of the group. While rank and medals can still be important to the character who receives them, it won't necessarily make that character the leader of the group, because every character has an equally important job to do within the context of the mission. You, in the guise of a higher-ranking NPC, can even spell out each character's role in the mission before sending them out.

Having well-defined roles gives the players a sense of their place in the mission and provides them with some protection when another player tries to "pull rank." They can point to the orders and their part in the mission. This concept also emphasizes the importance of the group as a team who must work together to reach a common goal, instead of a military unit that must follow the orders of the ranking officer.

You can give other players a chance to shine when using the "team of specialists" concept by either rotating or splitting leadership within the group.

Rotating leadership is an arrangement in which the leader changes from one mission to the next. If you have a team of specialists, the leader for any specific mission is determined by which character has the right abilities to best complete the mission. For example, if the mission is mostly about battle, the fighter should lead. If the mission is mostly about stealth, the rogue should lead.

Split leadership occurs when one character is in charge of one part of the mission while another character is in charge of a different part. For example, the highest-ranking character ("lieutenant") might be in charge of the overall mission, while the one with the most combat

expertise ("sergeant") deploys the troops when the party gets into a battle. Or the PC ranger might be in charge of getting the group to the mission location, and the PC rogue might be in charge of executing the mission once the group arrives.

Split or rotating leadership roles can be spelled out in the group's orders at the beginning of the mission and can lead to some interesting roleplaying opportunities. Characters will have to work out the dynamics of joint leadership, perhaps at one point following someone who isn't used to leading others. But because the players know it's not a permanent situation, they should be more willing to give the new leader(s) a chance to succeed.

Ultimately, you have to figure out what works best for your group, based on the dynamics and the various personalities of the players. As you incorporate ranks and medals into your game, remember two things:

First, this is a game that should be fun for all players. It is your job to make sure the players are enjoying themselves.

Second, players are happiest when they have some sense of free will in the game. They don't want to be herded into or through an adventure by you or another character. So if you use orders within your campaign, make sure the characters have some say in how those orders are carried out.

TREASURE IN A WAR CAMPAIGN

You need to address several issues when dealing with treasure in a war campaign. First, how do you reward characters with items as they progress through the campaign? Second, how will you provide characters with an outlet for selling or trading old and unused treasure? Third, how will characters be able to re-equip expendable items when they are depleted? Finally, how do you make sure your characters are equipped properly as they gain levels and fight tougher battles?

The main problem with treasure in a war campaign is that battles are fought in fields, or forests, or even in towns—out in the open—and treasure is normally not secreted out in the open. Of course, the PCs can pick over the bodies of the fallen after a battle. But wars are often fought by large forces using cheap weapons, so there might not be much of value for the characters to find after a battle.

However, searching bodies can be one of the best ways for low-level characters to add to their wealth. Selling used armor can be quite profitable for characters just starting out in their careers. And even if the PCs are comfortable picking over the fallen for a few coins and some gear, there might not be any place to sell these items in the middle of a war, especially if the PCs are behind the lines.

The most noble of the PCs might even have moral objections to such profiteering. However, dealing with the so-called black market is one viable option for giving your characters a way to sell old and confiscated gear. The dangers of dealing in scavenged war materials can make



A well-stocked army offers its soldiers plenty of choices for gear

for a great adventure or some fun roleplaying situations as the characters have to contend with shady characters and the threat of getting caught by their commanders.

As the characters progress, they will need more than just scavenged armor, though. One option for improving their prospects of gaining treasure is to send them on missions that give them a chance to fight more powerful creatures that have decent gear and treasure. You could even send the PCs into a dungeon or an enemy stronghold to look for a powerful artifact or supplies to use against the enemies. While there, they could easily find a hidden stash of treasure, items, or magical gear.

These types of missions should be the exception more than the rule in a war campaign. If you keep sending your PCs into dungeons, you'll lose the feel of being in the middle of a war. There's a way to use the war milieu to help provide the more objective rewards that players so often crave. Most treasure issues can be addressed with two simple mechanisms: recognition and requisition.

War heroes gain recognition in many forms: fame, promotions, and even monetary rewards. Of course, decorations are the most obvious way to recognize heroic deeds. Take a look through the decorations described on page 90. You can use these decorations to reward your characters, or create ones of your own to fit your campaign.

Promotions can also help PCs in a couple of ways. Promotions can mean higher pay or access to better equipment. Eventually, promotions can lead to PCs occupying seats

at the war planning table. They'll see the larger picture of the war effort firsthand, and that'll undoubtedly give them the information to assign themselves interesting missions (read: adventures).

If the characters have done something truly heroic, or completed a particularly tough mission that had a major impact on the course of the war, you can even go so far as to reward them with items from the castle treasury. These could be monetary rewards, better equipment, or even magic items.

Requisition lies at the other end of the spectrum. Instead of characters being rewarded for deeds performed, they are given the supplies they need ahead of time for an upcoming mission. Perhaps, as they gain levels (and ranks within the military), the PCs can even requisition items for themselves.

In addition to the standard items of warfare that the military provides to all soldiers, the PCs might also get a salary. This salary and the requisitioned supplies can be an easy way to hand out treasure awards on a regular basis, helping to ensure that the characters have the right amount and level of equipment for their level. If your PCs begin to fall behind the averages shown in Table 5-1: Character Wealth by Level, page 135 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, they might not be able to handle encounters aimed at a group of their level.

As with the other issues covered in this section, you will have to find the way that works best for rewarding

characters in your campaign. You might even be able to drop a treasure chest down into the middle of a battlefield. Just make sure it makes sense for that treasure to be there—for example, deciding that it's part of the opposing army's payroll or an intercepted shipment of replacement equipment.

STRATEGIC DOWNTIME

All characters need daily sleep or meditation to recuperate from the rigors of battle, but some PCs will need a bit of extra time away from the monsters, mysteries, and mayhem of the adventure setting to take care of personal matters. Strategic downtime is the time PCs spend away from encounter situations. It often occurs between gaming sessions.

Downtime can be as simple as a few nights at an inn or a temple to regain lost hit points or heal ability damage. Or it could mean a month in a laboratory researching a new spell or crafting a magic item. This time can give nonfighters a chance to have a small adventure of their own, or it could just be used for relaxing or carousing. What downtime is used for depends on the personality and the needs of each character.

Whatever the reason, most characters need some occasional downtime, and this fact presents a challenge in a war campaign. If the PCs are constantly on the battlefield or away on a long mission, in hostile territory far from their base, they might not be able to find a hospitable spot (let alone a bed) for months at a time. This can make it hard to heal completely between sessions and almost impossible for PCs to find the resources they need for research or crafting items.

Plus, if the PCs are part of a military force, they are not entirely in control of their own time. They go when and where they are told, and they cannot just decide to rest or perform research for a week. The war isn't going to take a break just because the PCs need a little R&R. When the characters do get a break from action, you need to either find a way for the war to slacken (a brief armistice, perhaps) or keep track of changing conditions during the downtime.

If the characters are fighting close to home, they might be given a furlough by their commanding officer, providing some much-needed time off. The upside of this method is that the PCs will have access to resources at the base (or perhaps a nearby town) for research, crafts, side adventures, or more frivolous recuperative activities. The downside is that you need to take into account the course of the war while the PCs are out of commission.

Furloughs do not work, however, when the PCs are nowhere near their base of operations or are deep in hostile territory. If the PCs just need a safe haven for some rest and recuperation, you can use one of these tried-and-true plot devices: the burned-out keep, the empty cave, or the partisan farmer.

Here's how these concepts work. The PCs are tired and sore. They have been marching or riding all day and have fought one too many fights. The arcane spellcasters

are out of spells, the divine spellcasters have no healing left, and the barbarian is all raged out. Suddenly, off in the distance, one of the characters spots the scorched remains of a keep. Perhaps it was destroyed during the war. Perhaps it's a crumbling ruin from some other war fought long ago. The PCs search the area but find no evidence of recent enemy travel. It seems safe, so they bed down for the night.

The empty cave and the partisan farmer work the same way, except that the PCs spot the outline of the cave entrance or they see some smoke rising from a chimney in the distance. The cave is currently free of large predators, and the farmer has no allegiance to the enemy that the PCs are fighting. They have found a safe haven they can use for a night or a week. Perhaps this haven can even be used as a base of operations while the characters complete their mission.

In addition to providing shelter and safety, these spots can easily lead to side adventures. The ruined keep could have a hidden secret (or even a small dungeon adventure) buried under the rubble. The cave might be the home of a large monster that was out hunting when the PCs arrived. The farmer might be involved in something nefarious or have a mystery to solve that necessitates recruiting the characters' help.

However, these safe havens don't necessarily provide the characters with the kind of resources they need for the more involved activities that they might want to pursue during longer downtimes. In this case, you might need to introduce the members of the resistance (who need not speak with a fake French accent).

The resistance is, of course, a group of local residents who oppose the enemy by performing acts of sabotage. They will often have a secret base of operations (perhaps the cave, ruined keep, or farmhouse mentioned above) and can provide the PCs with much-needed supplies, a place to rest, intelligence about the enemy, resources for research and item creation, and even side adventures that require stealth instead of brute force (for those characters who enjoy that kind of adventure).

It's easy enough to introduce the resistance into a scenario. Their agents can find the PCs and lead them to the secret base. The characters could be given a contact name and a password in their mission instructions. The two parties could even meet while both are trying to complete the same mission, which can give your PCs a chance to use their Diplomacy skills.

In addition to providing the perfect safe haven for short or long rest periods, the resistance can be a great source for intrigue. That group could have a contact inside an enemy stronghold or a member with vital information who has been captured and must be rescued, which can lead to exciting undercover operations. The resistance could even have been infiltrated by a mole whom the PCs must ferret out before they are all captured. The possibilities for side adventures off the battlefield are nearly endless with the introduction of a resistance group to your war campaign.

What happens to the rest of the war while the PCs are busy on side quests or taking a long furlough? Unlike a dungeon, where the monsters are somewhat contained and conditions aren't as likely to change when the PCs rest for a day or a week, the course of a war can and should change constantly as forces advance or retreat, major battles are won or lost, and conditions shift on the battlefield.

You can handle this problem in a number of ways. First, you can keep track of the ebb and flow of the war during downtime and then bring the PCs up to speed on any changes when they return. If you want to, you can use the downtime to make changes to the campaign, which can affect future scenarios.

For example, if the PCs are behind enemy lines working with the resistance, they might be cut off from information about what's happening on the home front. They could return from their mission only to find the enemy has taken their master's castle and thrown the ruler in the dungeon. Now the PCs must rescue the king and begin a rebellion to overthrow the new regime.

If you're not ready for such a major change in your campaign, you can simply chart the course of major battles (either through die rolls, deduction based on military factors such as force size and position, or simply deciding for yourself) and then make subtle changes based on those outcomes.

Not every DM will want the headache of keeping track of changing conditions, though, and some players don't deal well with changes that are out of their control. There are a few ways for you to halt the action without the tactic seeming artificial.

For example, there can be a lull in the fighting, which gives the PCs an opportunity for a rest while the two forces regroup. The enemy could suffer a devastating loss, forcing their military to retreat until they can get reinforcements. Or the war can grind to a standstill, with both forces so entrenched that neither side can make any significant advances. There could even be a timely truce called while the leaders discuss terms for ending the hostilities. Winter weather or the rainy season can set in, making it impossible to continue fighting until better weather returns.

Any of these ideas can give PCs ample downtime without the need for you to chart the continuing course of the war during the break. And these are natural interruptions that a real war might have, so it won't seem odd that nothing happens while the PCs are resting or researching.

Another way to give PCs some downtime without interfering with the flow of the campaign is for each player to run multiple characters. This system allows players to swap characters anytime one of their characters needs a rest or wants to do some out-of-game activities. However, this can be a major scheduling and record-keeping headache for both you and the players.

For one thing, you have to decide how unplayed characters advance. You can either force players to split

experience points between all their characters, award full experience points to all characters, or award experience only to those characters that actually participated during the game session that just ended.

There are pros and cons to each system. Awarding partial experience to all characters slows down everyone's advancement. Awarding full experience lets characters advance faster, but players have to update two or more characters much more often. Awarding experience normally (only to the characters who participated) will allow for normal advancement of the played characters but will ultimately result in a group with PCs of many different levels, making it hard to create encounters that work for all characters present at a session.

The other problem comes when the group is sent off on long missions well away from its base of operations. When this happens, players are pretty much stuck with the characters that make the initial trip unless you can find some plausible way for characters to switch in the middle of an adventure.

However, running multiple characters can be a lot of fun for both the DM and the players. It gives players the chance to try out different kinds of characters from the ones they normally play, gives the group more specialists to draw upon for specific missions, provides some ready NPCs for you when you need a hostage the characters care about or a messenger that they will trust, and allows characters to take downtime whenever they need it without impacting the flow of the game or the war.

ADVENTURING OFF THE BATTLEFIELD

While constant battling is a great source of experience points, it can wear down the PCs and become almost monotonous. In addition, not every character is a fighter. Many players enjoy roleplaying as much as, if not more than, combat. They prefer skills, feats, and spells that help them unravel mysteries or deal with NPCs in ways that don't involve a sword. It is up to you to make sure that every PC gets a chance to shine within the game, and to provide obstacles that give characters a chance to use noncombat abilities.

The rest of this section contains ideas to help you create adventures away from the battlefield for the PCs. Simply flesh these out or use them to jump start your creative juices and come up with your own. Either way, don't forget to provide characters with opportunities to use their noncombat skills.

Noncombat Scenario Ideas

Here are scenarios for war-based campaigns that don't necessarily center on combat.

Intelligence Gathering: A new enemy is massing troops, or perhaps the current enemy has been recruiting allies and that force is on the move. The general needs up-to-date intelligence about troop movements, the strength of the new foe, and the terms of the alliance that can be

used against the enemy. The PCs must make their way through the war zone out to the borderlands to gather the needed data and then return without being detected. Stealth and skill in gathering information are imperative for this mission to succeed.

Reinforcements: The keep is surrounded and cut off from help. A neighboring kingdom might come to the rescue if only a message can get through in time. The PCs must sneak out of the keep and through the troops encamped outside the walls and travel to the king's castle. Once they arrive, they must get an audience with the king and convince him to send reinforcements. This mission will require both stealth and diplomacy.

Prisoners of War: The PCs have been captured (perhaps during one of the other side missions). They have been stripped of their gear and tossed in the dungeon, or whisked off to a POW camp. They must find a way out of their cells, locate their gear, and escape. But they're not free yet, for they are still deep in enemy territory, sticking out like elves in a dwarf community. They'll need disguises, perhaps even forged identification papers, and a lot of luck to find their way home again.

Escaped Prisoner: An enemy spy held in the dungeon has escaped and is making her way back to the enemy base with important information about defenses, castle weaknesses, and troop strength. She must be stopped at all costs. The PCs are sent out to track down the escaped prisoner and make sure she hasn't passed on her secrets to anyone along the way. A ranger for tracking or a mage with scrying ability is an absolute necessity for this mission.

Secret Weapon: There have been rumors that the enemy has a secret weapon. Perhaps it's a new type of siege engine. Perhaps it's some unearthed artifact of a bygone age. The PCs must infiltrate the enemy's military, find out where they are keeping the secret weapon, and then either destroy it or steal it. This mission will require ingenuity, disguise, and perhaps magical knowledge to complete.

Saboteur: A saboteur has infiltrated the PCs' military base. Weapon caches have been destroyed, alchemical

ingredients and spell components gone missing, guards found dead at their posts. Rumors are running rampant, and everyone in the keep is edgy with paranoia. The PCs must root out the saboteur quickly before morale breaks down completely and soldiers begin deserting by the dozens. They must look at all the evidence and try to determine who the saboteur could be. Then they must prove it to the general and the men, perhaps by catching him or her in the act. This mission will require cunning, adeptness at gathering information, and deductive reasoning.

Disinformation Campaign: The generals are planning a major counterattack in the coming months, but the enemy has spies everywhere; it's almost impossible to take them by surprise. The PCs must find a way to get false plans into enemy hands to throw their spy network off track. The false plans are ready, but it's up to the PCs to devise and implement a plan for delivering them to an enemy spy in a way that will avoid suspicion. This mission might require someone with forgery skill as well as PCs who are good at planning.

Codebreaker: The military has intercepted several messages in the past few months through the resistance working within enemy borders. Unfortunately, they are in code and cannot be read. The PCs are asked to take a look at the messages and try to decode them. If they can't figure out the code, then the PCs will have to find someone who can—even if it means infiltrating an enemy base, finding the code key, and escaping again without alerting the enemy. This mission will require either deductive reasoning or disguise, stealth, forgery, and perhaps some magical help as well.

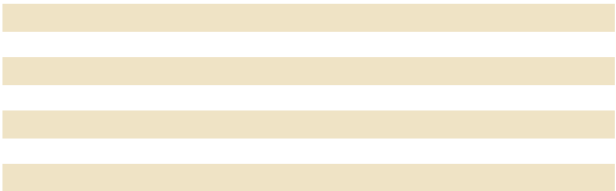
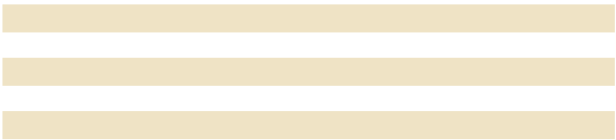
Barracks Adventure: Sometimes the day-to-day life of a soldier is adventure enough. Low-level PCs will find plenty of challenge just surviving basic training

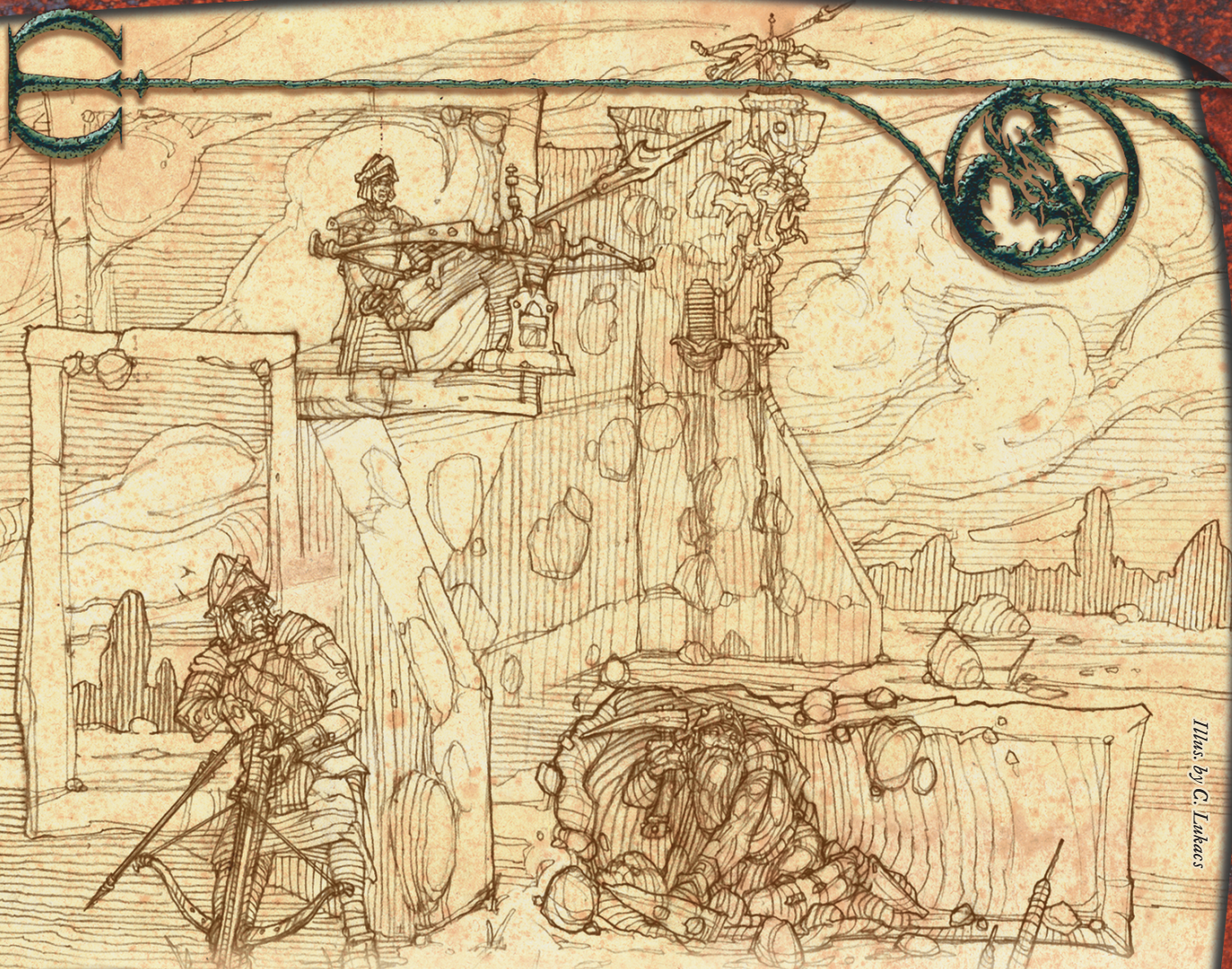
if they're unlucky enough to have sadistic instructors, bullies in their unit, and friends who are running a black market ring from within the barracks. Rivalries between ostensibly friendly units are commonplace, and the PCs might infiltrate a rival compound to pull off an embarrassing prank or sabotage the rival's equipment before a major inspection. The officer corps might be a hotbed of political intrigue, with junior officers fighting



A ranger saboteur plants some explosives to undermine a bridge

for a limited number of promotions by means both fair
and foul.





Illus. by C. Lukacs

Battlefield adventures mix familiar aspects of adventure design with new considerations that are part of the war genre. The tenets central to good adventure design in a traditional D&D campaign—balanced encounters, a player-driven plot, and a calibrated system of rewards for risk—still apply when you're creating a battlefield adventure.

But you've got new concerns as well. You have to handle PCs who have relative freedom to move around an entire battlefield, picking fights as they choose. You need to know how the PCs' actions affect the actions of thousands of NPCs. And you have to handle pacing in an environment where the larger battle will rage on even if the PC spellcasters are out of spells and their front-line melee combatants are sorely wounded.

Battlefield adventures are hybrids of the familiar and the new. They're also hybrids that draw inspiration from both site-based adventures (such as traditional D&D dungeons) and event-based adventures (such as political- and intrigue-based scenarios).

Site-Based: A battlefield adventure takes place on a single site—the battlefield. By the time the battle begins, you'll know the ins and outs of the defensive structures, terrain features, and other elements the PCs will be fighting over throughout the adventure. If a battle takes place in a forest, for example, you can bone up on the relevant battlefield elements in Chapter 3 of this book and page 87

of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. Elements such as cover and difficult terrain will be present in every combat you introduce, so you'll be able to adjudicate the effects of terrain and obstacles quickly.

Even if the PCs go where you weren't expecting, they're essentially staying at the same site, so you can use the same battlefield elements and groups of enemies (called maneuver elements) to create encounters wherever the PCs have wandered. The players at your table will probably never know you didn't have that specific encounter planned in advance.

Event-Based: In a battlefield adventure, the fortunes of allies or enemies can change rapidly depending on the PCs' actions. If the PCs successfully infiltrate the enemy castle's north tower, for example, they can silence the catapults that would otherwise keep the rest of the army at bay. Certain subsequent encounters become more or less likely depending on the choices the players and their characters make.

In some ways, events that occur during a battle serve a function similar to that the doors and corridors of a dungeon: They block off some possible future encounters while allowing access to others, and thus they channel the PCs' efforts. But there's one important difference. In a site-based adventure, the PCs can usually go back and explore areas they chose to bypass before. But events that transpire

on the battlefield can make some encounters thereafter impossible. If the PCs go around a trench network rather than through it, for example, they won't experience the encounter you had planned for them while they were in the trenches.

Maintaining the balance between site-based and event-based adventures is the key to having an exciting time at the game table. You want PCs to have a degree of flexibility—to travel over the same site on a variety of different missions. And you also want their choices to matter, as events they take part in build toward the battle's overall outcome, whether it's successful or disastrous.

HOOKING THE PCS

There are as many ways to motivate PCs as there are PCs. But within the genre of the battlefield adventure, some common kinds of motivators attract the PCs to the battlefield in the first place. Some fight for honor, king, and country. Others do battle for the promise of gold, or to settle an old score. Some have no choice in the matter, caught up in the winds of war against their will.

In order from least coercive to most coercive, here are some common motivators that prompt PCs to join an army and take part in massive battles.

Volunteer: When the kingdom faces invasion, heroes of all sorts rally around the flag and volunteer for the army to help defend their homeland. Many PCs will offer their service to king and country whenever some profoundly evil threat exists. Other PCs volunteer for different reasons: a sense of family or clan duty, the desire to escape an unappealing life at home and see the world, or simply because a friend or paramour recommended the military life.

Volunteer PCs tend to be self-motivated "good soldiers," so they usually don't need a lot of promised rewards to give a battle their utmost. The best missions for volunteer PCs give them a hand in the planning as well as the execution; some volunteers are such good soldiers that they fall into the rut of simply following orders rather than thinking for themselves.

Mercenary: These soldiers also volunteer for duty—but they make it clear going into the battle that the promise of tangible reward is what's keeping them on the front lines. Mercenary PCs are soldiers for hire, so they can move from army to army and from war to war with little difficulty.

Because they've chosen the mercenary life, these characters are keenly aware of the risks and rewards of combat. When you create battlefield adventures that use the mercenary hook, make sure you carefully balance the various rewards (experience points, gold, victory points, and recognition points) throughout the adventure so that the PCs never think they would be better off just quitting the battle and seeking their fortunes elsewhere.

Bystander: While most soldiers go off to war, some characters take part in battles simply because they find themselves on the battlefield. If the PCs are in a city that's suddenly besieged by a demon army, for example, they're effectively part of the city's defenses, whether they like it or not.

Adventures that hook PCs with bystander motivations can have great immediacy, because this motivation makes the characters feel like they have been thrust onto the battlefield and must use their wits to survive. But you have to provide tangible rewards at a steady rate for bystander characters, because otherwise they will likely flee rather than continue fighting.

Draftee: Draftees are on the battlefield because someone else is forcing them to be there. The most obvious form of conscription is a literal draft, in which a nation or region equips every able-bodied citizen it can muster. But there are other kinds of draftees, from criminals granted pardon in exchange for military service to young nobles who must serve a term in the army before they come into their inheritance.

The draftee motivation rarely works on player characters for long. They're generally capable and innovative enough to escape military service that they want no part of, and they often resent being forced to fight. This motivation works if the players willingly accept their characters' lot as draftees, but most players will find long-term draftee status to be demeaning, not motivating. The draft is a fast way to get PCs to the front lines of their first battle, but during that battle you should be thinking of ways to transition them to better long-term motivators. Maybe they grow to hate the enemy after losing friends in battle (turning them into volunteers), or good conduct earns them an offer to join a more professional regiment (giving them a mercenary motivation).

While the bystander and draftee approaches are coercive, that doesn't mean they're wholly inappropriate for hooking the PCs. The coercion that brought the PCs to the battlefield in the first place isn't necessarily strong enough to dictate their actions once they get there, after all. PCs have a long tradition of defying orders, or at least interpreting them in such a way that they get the job in a manner of their own choosing.

Furthermore, being drafted and getting direct orders from a superior officer provides the PCs with a clarity of purpose. They're undertaking the battlefield adventure because they were ordered to so, and any second thoughts over whether it's the best long-term path to take is pointless. Once they have been given their marching orders, the PCs can simply buckle down and get to work on more pressing, less existential matters.

DESIGNING THE BATTLEFIELD

A battlefield is a big place, and mapping every 5-foot square of it isn't a very efficient way to spend your preparation time.

Instead, create a battlefield map on a piece of graph paper where 1 square equals 200 feet. It's a scale that lets you fit the whole field onto one sheet of paper, but gives you enough detail so you can improvise if the PCs go somewhere you weren't expecting.

To use examples from real-world history, the Battle of Agincourt had about thirty thousand soldiers on both

sides, and its battlefield map would measure 40 squares by 60 squares. The Battle of Gettysburg had troop density that approximates a fantasy battle like those portrayed in the movies. It involved one hundred seventy-five thousand soldiers on both sides, and its battlefield map would measure roughly 60 by 80 squares.

Don't hesitate to fill your battlefield map with interesting features. Terrain features give strategically minded players some tools to work with as they try to gain whatever edge they can. And in general, terrain features make for more interesting and memorable encounters.

As you draw your battlefield map, consider including some or all of the following features.

Terrain Topography: In all likelihood, your battlefield is not a perfectly flat area. You can use contour lines, like those on topographic maps, to show the elevation of slopes, hills, and gullies relative to normal flat terrain. Choose a vertical scale that makes sense for the overall battlefield, because you don't want to obscure all the map's other features with ring after ring of contour lines. For relatively flat battlefields, 20 feet per contour line is fine, and 50 feet per contour line works for hilly or mountainous battlefields.

The scale for your battlefield map is too large to determine exactly where gentle and steep slopes are. You'll put those on the encounter maps you prepare. The contour lines serve another purpose: They help you determine how far soldiers can see and how much of the overall battle the PCs can survey from any given point.

Even flat plains usually have some gentle undulation to the terrain, and such small slopes block line of sight. Vegetation and manmade structures (which you'll draw later) and elevation changes too small to deserve their own contour line can also block line of sight.

Vegetation: Mark on your map the presence of forests, hedgerows, and other kinds of vegetation that block line of sight, provide good hiding places, or slow movement. At the 200-feet-per-square scale, you aren't marking every tree, or even every grove of trees. You're marking stands of trees large enough to give an entire unit concealment or otherwise impact the armies' battle plans.

Some desert and mountain battlefields might have relatively little vegetation. If you're drawing a forest battlefield, on the other hand, it's probably faster to assume that most of the battlefield is covered with trees and instead mark clearings and other gaps in the forest.

Natural Obstacles and Hazards: Many a famous battle took place over a river crossing, so consider the presence of bodies of water on the battlefields you create. Cliffs, rocky terrain, and bogs also impact an army's ability to move and fight, so you should mark their locations as well.

Manufactured Structures: Now that you've created the battlefield's natural features, it's time to build things on it. First, consider what buildings might exist on the battlefield, whether they're simple farmhouses, secretive wizard colleges, or elf tree-house villages. Sometimes these structures are the prize that the two armies are fighting over, but other times they just represent the home of an unlucky farmer whose fields are now a military encampment.

If your battlefield is a city, your map will be covered with manmade structures. You don't have to draw every building, of course, but at the 200-foot scale you can indicate neighborhood types (temple district, slums, harbor quarter, and so forth) and the presence or absence of major thoroughfares.

Roads are vital in military planning because they provide fast travel across a battlefield that might be covered with vegetation, natural obstacles, and other hazards that impede movement. Add roads to your battlefield map, keeping in mind that armies have the manpower to build their own roads to set up efficient supply lines or allow greater tactical movement, should they care to do so.

Fortifications: Classic castle sieges have a preexisting fortification as their centerpiece. Drawing the walls and towers of the castle is important, of course. But your real work in such a case lies with the individual encounter maps (on the 5-foot-per-square scale) that show the field beyond a typical section of a wall—and, if the battle goes poorly for the defenders, the interior of the towers and maybe even the lord's personal chambers.

Not every fortification is built months or years before a battle takes place at its location. Armies construct all sorts of field-expedient fortifications on the eve of battle, from low walls to moats to trenches. Mark the presence of major trench networks and earthwork walls on your map.

Starting Lines: Now that you've got all the natural and manufactured features on your battlefield map, it's almost time to populate it with soldiers. But first, make copies of the map you've created thus far. You'll want copies when you chart the course of the battle (as described in *The Course of Events*, below).

Once you've made the copies, mark the starting positions of the two armies on your map. You don't need to identify which square every maneuver element stands in when the trumpets sound, but you definitely should mark which squares have soldiers in them at the beginning of the battle. Identify the soldiers by their tactical purpose (infantry, cavalry, and so on), and note the location of any elite or otherwise unusual units. If the lich-queen has fielded a unit of devourers, it's worth noting what part of the undead army's line they occupy.

Headquarters and Reserves: Placing an army's headquarters is a balancing act. The HQ should be close enough to the front lines that a commander can issue orders and get them carried out quickly, but far enough from the front lines that an enemy push won't seize the site and completely disrupt the friendly army.

Headquarters often are placed on high ground (so the generals can see what's going on) and near roads (so messengers can deliver orders quickly). Some armies might use magic to monitor the battle and communicate with their troops, so they can afford to keep their HQs in secure, hidden places.

Few armies put their entire strength on the front lines at the beginning of a battle. Most keep a quarter or more of their strength as a strategic reserve that they only commit at the critical juncture, whether good or ill. If the enemy

blasts a gap in your front lines, it's time to commit the reserves to plug the gap. If you've fought your way to the doors of the castle you're assaulting, commit the reserves to break through the doors after the main assault has worn down the defense.

Before that critical juncture, the reserves are usually lurking somewhere behind the front lines, often on or near a road that gives them quick access to the battlefield, near the headquarters, or atop a hill or other terrain feature that lets them monitor the course of events. Mark their location on your battlefield map.

Supply Lines: Soldiers have to eat and drink (well, most of them do), archers need arrows, and wounded troopers need access to bandages and healing magic. Unless the army is foraging for all its needs, those supplies are coming from somewhere behind the front lines. Mark on your battlefield map the routes that supply wagons take to reach the army, and where the army stores its supplies prior to dispersing them to front-line units.

Fantastic Elements: All the elements you've drawn on your battlefield map are ones that you'd find on a real-world battlefield map. But D&D is a game of high fantasy, so many of the battles will have an element of the fantastic about them. Don't be shy about adding overtly magical elements to your battlefields, whether they're just there for descriptive effect or have some strategic function. Maybe the fantastic element is a tool one army can use to gain an advantage over the other, or perhaps the fantastic element is what the two armies are fighting over.

For example, a huge pillar of fire appears at the center of the battlefield, and neither army knows why. It illuminates 400 feet away as brightly as daylight, even at night, and the battlefield squares adjacent to it are areas of severe heat (as described in *Heat Dangers*, page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). The presence of the pillar won't have a huge impact on the battle, but it'll make the battle more memorable, and it might lead to a future adventure if the characters are curious about why it appeared.

Or perhaps the battlefield has Stonehenge-like circles scattered across it, and anyone standing within such a

circle gains fast healing 1. Control of the circles becomes an important key to winning the battle, because battered units can more quickly restore themselves and rejoin the fray.

A portal between an underground realm and the Elemental Plane of Earth might draw the attention of warring dwarf clans, both of whom will stop at nothing to claim the portal and start mining gems from the caverns of the Plane of Earth. The inky-black pit surrounded by crumbling rock is the focal point of the battle, and whichever army seizes and holds it wins the battle.

THE COURSE OF EVENTS

Now you know how the battlefield looks at the beginning of the battle. But just as no plan survives contact with the enemy, no battlefield map is accurate once the trumpets of war sound.

Go back to the copies you made of the battlefield map. Now consider how the battle would play out if the PCs weren't taking part. At periodic time increments—every two hours during the day and once at night works for most battles—draw a new map that shows how troops have moved around. You're creating a time-lapse version of your battlefield map, taking the battle from its beginning to its conclusion.

That means you're deciding who wins the battle—and that's okay. The PCs will still have their chance to influence events using victory points (explained on page 78). Right now, you're establishing the baseline result. If the PCs are clever and heroic, they can earn enough victory points to turn the tide of battle upward from the baseline. If they're cowardly, unlucky, or overmatched, their army might do worse than the baseline result you've established.

Concern yourself only with major troop movements—ones that result in territory changing hands or that otherwise have an impact on the outcome of the battle. For example, a battle between orcs and elves might begin with an orc infantry charge across no-man's-land, which is repulsed by elf archers. Two hours later, elf skirmishers try to

MOVEMENT ON THE BATTLEFIELD MAP

One convenient aspect of the 200-feet-per-square scale is that 200 feet happens to be how far an armored foot soldier will march in a minute's time, given good terrain. That makes it easier to figure out how long it takes to get from one part of the battlefield to another.

Troops can hustle, of course, but they'll also have to contend with all the terrain features you drew that slow movement, such as forests, bogs, and so on. One of the most important "terrain features" troops must contend with is the presence of other friendly troops. Unlike the tactical scale, which allows creatures to move through friendly squares unhindered, the battlefield map scale imposes a half-speed penalty for moving through a friendly unit. No matter how well organized they are, it takes time for two crowds of people to move through each other.

Because of the small scale of the battlefield map, it's easiest to just count up the number of ways movement is impeded, and cut the unit's speed in half for each one. Simpler is better on the battlefield map, because you're just trying to get to the next encounter—and hence the next fun playing experience.

All the following conditions cut movement on the battlefield map in half:

- Significant terrain in the square, such as forests or hills. Count each terrain element separately; a square with both forest and hills will reduce movement to one-quarter normal.
- Friendly units in the square.
- Significant fortifications in the square.
- Unit is trying to move stealthily.
- Unit is moving in the dark (even if it has light sources or dark-vision; it's hard to navigate when you can see only a few score feet in front of you).

infiltrate across no-man's-land, but orc patrols catch them. Six hours after the battle begins, the orcs finally get their siege engines set up, and they begin a withering bombardment of the elf lines. The orc infantry charges the elves during a break in the bombardment at the 8-hour mark, and the elves only barely repulse the charge. So far, you've drawn maps for the battle start, the 2-hour mark, the 6-hour mark, and the 8-hour mark.

The orcs make a few probing attacks during the night, but the elves know they won't withstand the more serious assault that's sure to come in the morning. So they send their elite cavalry around to attack the orc rear at dawn. This surprise attack is spectacularly successful, and the orc army has to withdraw in disarray after most of its supplies are captured and its headquarters destroyed. Now you've drawn two more maps: a nighttime one showing the path of the orc probes and the elf cavalry ride, and a battle's end map showing the direction of the cavalry charge and the orc retreat.

Your time-lapse maps don't need to be things of beauty. The maps exist so you'll have an answer when the PCs climb a hilltop and ask what's going on across the river. Time-lapse maps also give you a degree of control over the pacing of the adventure. If the PCs are attached to an elf infantry unit, you know how much time they have to prepare between orc charges.

THE ADVENTURE FLOWCHART

Now that you know the course of the overall battle, it's time to figure out the PCs' role. Depending on the PCs' position in their army, they might be assigned any number of missions during the battle. The success or failure of their first mission affects their subsequent actions on the battlefield, and those actions in turn lead to more possibilities. Whether the PCs' army wins or loses the battle, the characters themselves will be busy until the last blow falls.

The easiest way to manage the myriad possibilities on the battlefield is to create a flowchart showing how the success or failure of the PCs—and the decisions they make after each victory or loss—leads to further missions and encounters.

Such a flowchart becomes your adventure map. The characters will move from encounter to encounter on your flowchart, choosing directions when they face strategic dilemmas and hoping to pick up as many victory points and recognition points as possible along the way.

The flowchart you create is a combination of the overall battle, which you've mapped out, and the PCs' role in the friendly army. To use the above example, characters attached to elf infantry would have a flowchart in which the orcs' charges figure prominently. Each orc charge is an important box with various lines leading from it depending on whether the characters turned back the charge (and whether they chased the retreating orcs) or whether the orcs forced the PCs and nearby allies to retreat.

But if the PCs are part of the elite elf cavalry, they'd have a very different flowchart—one that showed how their decisions about speed and stealth determined how many encounters they had during their encirclement of the orc horde, and whether they reach the orc HQ before dawn.

MAKING MEMORABLE ENCOUNTERS

At its heart, a battlefield adventure is a collection of tactically interesting and dramatically suspenseful encounters. (The same is true of standard D&D adventures, by the way.) Before you start drawing the lines that connect the boxes in your flowchart, come up with as many interesting situations as you can. In other words, fill up the boxes in your flowchart with cool stuff before you draw the lines connecting them.

Don't design each encounter completely—that comes later. But think of a short phrase that answers the question "What is this encounter about?" Depending on the battle you're fighting and the PCs' roles within it, you might come up with encounters such as "a night fight in a network of trenches," "a combat with heavily armored ogres," "a search for a hidden sniper," and "a chance for the PCs to rally some demoralized friendly troops."

To assist in your brainstorming, here are some elements that can make for memorable encounters. Not every encounter should have every element, because most of the elements discussed below add both interest and complexity to an encounter. Make sure you don't put so much into an encounter that it becomes unwieldy and isn't fun for you to run (or the players to play) at the gaming table.

Terrain: No matter where the battlefield lies, it has all sorts of cover, concealment, and difficult terrain that the PCs must contend with—and turn to their advantage. Even if the battle is taking place on a plain, give the PCs some varied terrain to work with. A farmer's field will have hedgerows that provide cover, plowed earth that's so soft it counts as difficult terrain, and unharvested crops that offer concealment to those who hide among the corn rows. In general, the more diverse the terrain, the better the game.

Varied Enemies: Just as PC groups benefit from specialization (fighters are good at melee, clerics heal, wizards throw *fireballs*, and rogues sneak), so too do enemy units improve when not everyone is good at the same thing. An encounter with hobgoblin warriors gets more interesting if they're accompanied by a hobgoblin cleric to heal their wounds or a bard to inspire them in battle. The PCs now have to assess which hobgoblins are the greatest threat throughout the combat rather than simply wading into battle and lashing out at the nearest monster.

It's easy to go too far, however. If you create widely divergent statistics for every hobgoblin in the squad, you'll be flipping between statistics blocks throughout the combat, and the pace of battle will slow to a crawl. Two or three different kinds of NPCs per encounter (a basic trooper, a specialist of some kind, and a leader) is enough to provide variety without making your head explode.

Monsters on the Battlefield: A steady diet of humanoid spear-carriers doesn't make for an exciting battlefield adventure—even if it's "realistic" that such rank-and-file encounters comprise most of the PCs' fighting. Some monsters make terrific (not to mention terrifying) opponents on the battlefield. Unlike their real-world counterparts, fantasy armies must face such varied threats as boulder-throwing giants (artillery), doppelganger infiltration teams, and dragons flying close air support.

It's particularly striking to take monsters out of their usual environment and "repurpose" them for the battlefield. Maybe an army puts barding on trained carrion crawlers and sends them toward enemy lines prior to a major assault. Perhaps another army loads its catapults with magic urns that each contain a gray ooze that eats away at the stockade walls when the urn breaks.

Magic Elements: Most armies use magic to give them an advantage on the battlefield, and the PCs will have to contend with enemy magic as they employ spells of their own. A battle against a squad of undead troopers becomes more difficult when they're within a *desecrate* effect; do the PCs attack the undead directly or try to remove the desecration first? Or perhaps the PCs must ambush an enemy convoy—a task made much easier if they're attacking from within *hallucinatory terrain*.

Not every encounter needs a magic element, because the PCs bring a lot of magic to the table themselves. If you include one or two encounters where a pervasive magic element has an important influence on the outcome, you'll stretch the players' strategic thinking and emphasize that they're playing a high fantasy game, not a medieval warfare simulation.

Environmental Effects: Even a routine battle becomes more tactically challenging when it takes place in the dark, in driving rain, or during a catapult bombardment. If the PCs adapt to the environmental effects you describe, they can get an edge on the battlefield. They can hide in the morning fog, for example, advance between volleys of arrows from a nearby unit, or sneak behind enemy lines during the dark. Environmental effects can add dramatic tension, too, as high winds stymie the PC ranger's sniping efforts or rain turns the battlefield so muddy that the PCs can't retreat fast enough to avoid a trebuchet barrage.

Complex and Multiple Objectives: When the PCs have more complex goals than "overcome the enemies," they have a greater tactical challenge. It's harder for high-level PCs to seize a tower if they aren't supposed to destroy

it in the process, for example. Perhaps the PCs are ordered to seize prisoners for interrogation, forcing them to win a fight but pull their punches to leave as many enemies alive as possible. And what if the PCs are chasing retreating enemies northward when they see a single enemy flee westward on horseback? Whom do they chase?

Timed Elements: Many military plans rely on a specific sequence of events: Unit A has to seize the hill before Unit B moves through the valley to distract the enemy cavalry so Unit C can charge the enemy's lines. More complicated plans require simultaneous movement among different units, so the PCs must not only overcome the challenge but must do it at a specific time.

For example, say the characters are defending a castle's main gate from the battlements overhead. When a platoon of gnolls charges with a battering ram, the PCs can't afford to take their time picking off the gnolls. They've got only a few rounds to kill enough gnolls to render the battering ram ineffective. The PCs know that the clock is ticking, so they'll choose tactics that maximize their effectiveness for a few rounds (such as jumping off the battlements and engaging the gnolls in melee), even if those tactics wouldn't be the best in the long term (because now the PCs are outside the walls and more vulnerable to attack themselves).

You can also put the PCs "on the clock" for multiple encounters in a row. If they have to clear out a mountain watchtower by sunset, for example, they might have to rush past hobgoblin sentries on the trail, an ogre trying to start avalanches from the base of the watchtower, and then the bugbears in the watchtower. The time pressure isn't as intense—it's not an "every round counts" situation—but the players will feel a sense of urgency as their characters rush up the mountain.

ENCOUNTER PACING

As you build encounters for your flowchart, consider adding some boxes that let you slow down the pace of encounters in game-world terms. If you have a typical group of PCs, the spellcasters will be out of spells after a half-dozen encounters. Depending on their access to healing magic, the PCs might be badly wounded or in perfect health.

If you don't take an active hand in controlling the pacing of your battlefield adventure, PCs left to their own inclinations can wind up in trouble because there are always more enemies to fight. If the fighters are healthy

BATTLEFIELD ENCOUNTERS

Chapter 3 details a number of encounters that are ready-made for a box on your flowchart.

- Cut supply line
- Reinforcements
- Destroy artillery
- Prisoner exchange
- Left behind
- Take out the trebuchet
- Get 'em out alive
- King of the hill

If you use these encounters in a battlefield adventure that's part of your ongoing campaign, you might want to replace the enemy forces described on pages 46 through 53 with ones of similar Encounter Levels that are more appropriate for the fantasy army the PCs are fighting.

To design your own fantasy army, see the relevant section on page 24.

but the wizards are tapped out, some of your characters will go for action while others recommend rest—a recipe for splitting the party. And if the campaign stakes for the battle are high (a titanic battle between good and evil, for example), the PCs might feel compelled to continue fighting even after expending all their resources. In a typical dungeon, characters can often come and go as they please, so they have control of their game-world pacing. But the battle itself won't be around forever (in most cases), so PCs in the adventure you're creating don't have that luxury.

In-Battle Downtime: You can avoid depleting the PCs' strength and resources to a perilous level by creating in-battle downtime for them—time away from the fight while the battle continues. This concept is similar to strategic downtime (discussed in Chapter 1), differing in the degree to which the characters remain directly connected to the events of the adventure while taking a break from the actual fighting themselves. During strategic downtime, the PCs might leave the vicinity of the battle and do something besides fight the enemy; during in-battle downtime, they remain close to the action but aren't currently engaged with the enemy themselves.

You can set up both short in-battle downtimes (in which the PCs have up to an hour or two between encounters) and long downtimes (enough time for spellcasters to rest and prepare spells). Doing so gives the PCs a fair shot at overcoming repeated challenges without punishing the spellcasters or forcing the PCs to fight beyond the limits of their endurance.

In-battle downtime works best as a DM's tactic when you explain the slowing of the game-world pace with a reason tied to the game world. Here are some ways to justify in-battle downtime.

Awaiting Orders: If the PCs are taking orders from higher-ups, they might have to wait for further orders after an encounter—especially an encounter that succeeded or failed spectacularly. If a runner has to make her way through a tangle of friendly troops, find the correct headquarters tent, and wait for the commander to decide what to do next before returning to the PCs, it might be hours before they get new instructions. Even if the PCs can communicate magically with their commanders, they might have to wait a long time for new orders. The commander might be pondering a strategic dilemma, waiting for something to happen elsewhere, or simply too busy to issue new orders to the PCs right away.

Ordered to Hold: No army is perpetually in motion, mainly because it's much harder to keep track of moving units than it is to command stationary lines. PCs who do particularly well might have to hold their positions until the rest of the army catches up (in either a geographic or strategic sense of the term). Unless an army has an overwhelming reason to hurry, most commanders will take care to consolidate gains made on the battlefield, make sure supply and reinforcements are ready for the next phase, and keep the various units that comprise the army working as a cohesive whole. That means the PCs might

bide their time for several hours before the army needs their services again.

Grunt Labor: Even elite troops sometimes have to dig their own trenches. If another front desperately needs a supply wagon but the drivers are casualties of war, the PCs might get pressed into service as teamsters. You can provide in-battle downtime by giving them orders that don't necessarily involve combat or NPC interaction but still take up game-world time.

Environmental Delays: When thunderstorms gather across the battlefield, the weather makes communication, fighting, resting, and reconnaissance more difficult and often results in delays in the plans of both armies. Bad weather is a chance for PCs to rest and make further battle plans—and you get the side benefit of using the storm to account for changes in the terrain (a mud-soaked field can be much harder to cross than dry earth) and possible changes in the enemy army (the arrival of new troops, a stealthy retreat of an outnumbered army, or the like).

One obvious environmental delay is nightfall. If neither army has many soldiers with low-light vision or darkvision, it's almost impossible to organize much more than sporadic skirmishes at night. Besides, most humanoid armies need to sleep periodically to be at their best. And even low-light vision and darkvision aren't as good as the sort of vision allowed by ordinary daylight. Imagine yourself sneaking around a lightless battlefield, able to see only enemies and landmarks that happen to be within 60 feet of you. Even dwarf or orc armies fighting on the surface curtail their activities at night, because it's too easy to lose contact with your comrades in the darkness. The only armies that push on despite darkness are the truly desperate and those armies that can see in the dark and never need to sleep, such as undead armies or forces made up of constructs.

Travel across the Battlefield: It might seem simple to move from a stationary army's right flank to its left flank, but doing so can be time-consuming. The rear echelon of an army can be a chaotic place, with supply trains moving in and out, patrols questioning everyone for passwords, and old fortifications hindering movement. If the PCs are traveling to join a unit that is itself on the move, the journey can take even longer because it's hard to find a specific unit amid the tumult of battle.

Only in a rare battle will such travel take more than a few hours, so this is a better justification for short downtimes than long downtimes. (It's hard for spellcasters to rest while they travel in any case.) But travel behind the lines typically involves neither combat, NPC interaction, nor tough decisions on the PCs' part, so it's a good way to provide some downtime and then get back to the action quickly.

Assigned to the Reserves: Particularly if the PCs have elite status within their army, they might get assigned to be part of the army's reserves. Commanders generally commit their reserves only when the situation is critical—on either the verge of a breakthrough or the brink of disaster. This arrangement ensures that any task the PCs undertake

is infused with drama, because commanders don't give routine tasks to their reserves. Finally, this justification is a good way to keep the PCs guessing about their role in the unfolding battle; they don't know whether they'll be attacking or defending, and as reserves they're almost always charging into a fluid situation on the battlefield.

Guard Duty: Every aspect of the allies' army, from its front-line troops to its rear supply wagons, is a target for the enemy. That means that almost everything needs to be guarded. Many missions in wartime can be boiled down to "Make sure this spot stays in our hands." If you want to give the PCs some simple downtime, have a commander task them with guarding something important—then don't have the enemy attack.

The siege of a castle is a good example of a battle that could include a lot of guard duty. If the PCs are defending the castle, they have downtime whenever the enemy isn't pressing the attack. They can sally forth on counter-raids, but doing so is much more dangerous than simply accepting the downtime and later continuing the fight from behind the safety of the castle's fortifications.

Telegraphing Downtime Length: Sometimes it can be a good idea to let the PCs know roughly how long a particular period of in-battle downtime will last. If you're using an environmental delay, a PC ranger (or allied NPC) can tell with a DC 15 Survival check that the bad weather will last all night. If the PCs are guarding a position, you can have a commander tell them that intelligence indicates the enemy won't attack it until tomorrow at the earliest.

But you don't always have to tell or hint at how long a downtime will last, and don't give away the length of a rest period if it isn't truly downtime. If the PCs have sentry duty in the trenches during a night when an orc raid is expected, they should anticipate getting into a fight within a few hours.

Don't Play out Downtime: When you build downtime into your battlefield adventures, make sure it's truly downtime, not something that will take up time at the game table. If you assign the PCs to guard duty, make sure the players don't spend a half-hour of real time deciding what the watch schedule will be. You can just get a quick sense of what each character is doing during the downtime, then announce, "The walls are quiet until shortly after nightfall, when . . ." Remember, you're trying to advance the game-world timeline and give the player characters a chance to rest. The players themselves don't get a rest; you want them to stay immersed in the action.

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#86

Build your own castle
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Great Stoney

Build your own cardboard castle

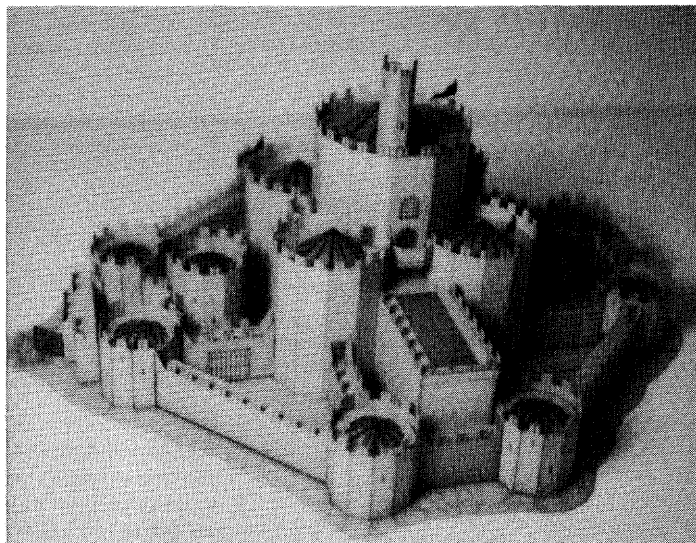
A grand tour

by Arthur Collins

The original name of this awesome structure was The High Keep of the Grand Chapter of the Order of St. Raphael. Since that was a little too elaborate for everyday use, the castle became known as Great Stoney. It is a fortified monastery, such as might be maintained by a band of ecclesiastical knights or an abbot who is also a temporal lord. While not a large castle in terms of area covered, it is quite tall and very well built, easily capable of housing a great number of folk of all degrees. The main chapel has a seating capacity of about 330, taking the balcony into consideration.

Great Stoney was designed to provide maximum security for its inhabitants without having to depend upon any natural defenses of the terrain. It is assumed that Great Stoney sits upon open meadowlands, surrounded by the fields that feed the monastic community. The surrounding area has no hills, cliffs, lakes, or other outstanding features to enhance the defendability of the castle. Therefore, it was built as concentric rings of stone, each part's defense easily supplemented by others, affording easy and rapid communication of forces within its perimeter.

This view of Great Stoney shows the main gate in profile, with the drawbridge lowered to an almost-horizontal position. The tall rectangular structure in the center is the great hall and cloister.



The great central tower rises eight stories (from the basement through the seventh story), with a watchtower going three stories higher. Supporting the central tower are four more towers, each five stories tall, grouped about the center in cloverleaf fashion. Giving further support to this huge volume of outward-pressing stone are eight two-story walls radiating out to the outer wall towers. Various other structures complete the complex.

Outer defenses: The outer walls of Great Stoney are very strong. They average about 10 feet in width, and rise two stories to the

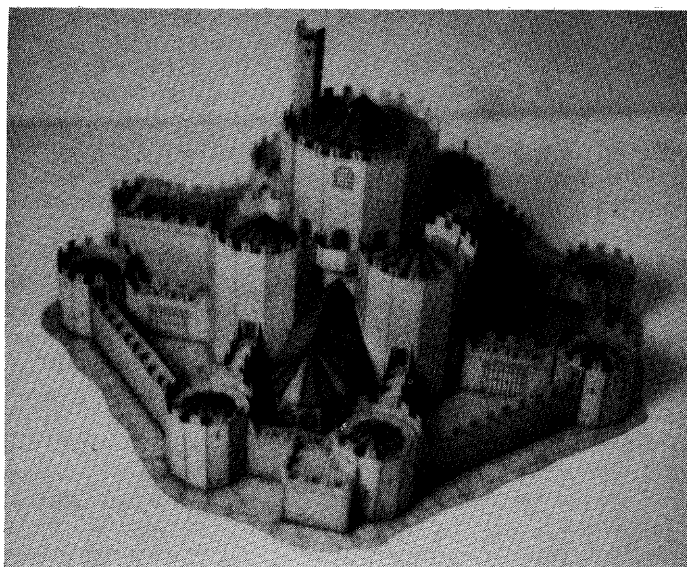
height of the walk-wall, with crenellated battlements. The outer wall towers are three stories high, crowned with conical timber roofs. The main entry to the castle is through a barbican. A barred double door and portcullis form the outer gate, and between them is a small space covered by a murder hole above. If intruders breach the outer gate and get into the barbican, they can be fired upon from the outer gate wall and the three towers surrounding the entry area. Exit from the barbican into the central bailey is by way of two normal-sized doors between the three gate towers. A well-guarded postern gate is at the other end of the complex.

Foundation level: Supporting such a rockpile as Great Stoney requires massive foundations. Here in the bowels of the castle are the places where food and arms are stored, meat smoked, wine and ale made, and (yes, even here) criminals confined. In three of the towers, the foundation walls have been hollowed out to make extra storage hatches a few feet high.

Down here is also the crypt and its chapel, behind a wrought-iron gate. Corridors leading away from the crypt chapel traverse the foundation. Dead brothers are buried here by prying stones out of the floors and walls, then sealing up the bodies behind cenotaphs.

Basement level: Here on the main (first) level are the great public rooms of the complex — the kitchen, great hall, grand gallery, infirmary, sacristy, chapel, and chapter

The castle as seen from the rear. The most prominent features in the foreground are the postern gate along the outer wall and the chapel with its sharply angled timber roof and stained-glass windows.



Complete instructions and floor plans inside

house. There is also a lavabo, or bath area, where water from the cisterns can be run into a large pool for bathing. Garderobes (medieval toilets) and middens (cesspits) are everywhere throughout the complex. The middens have to be cleaned out every so often, and this is the single most obnoxious job of castle life.

The chapter house is a small chamber where senior members of the order gather for business meetings. The main chapel is the great worship area for the whole community. The altar has a hidden safe built into its back. Great windows are set into the exterior walls of the chapel. Font, pulpit, and chairs for the presiding officers are in the front. Seating is augmented by a balcony in the rear of the chamber.

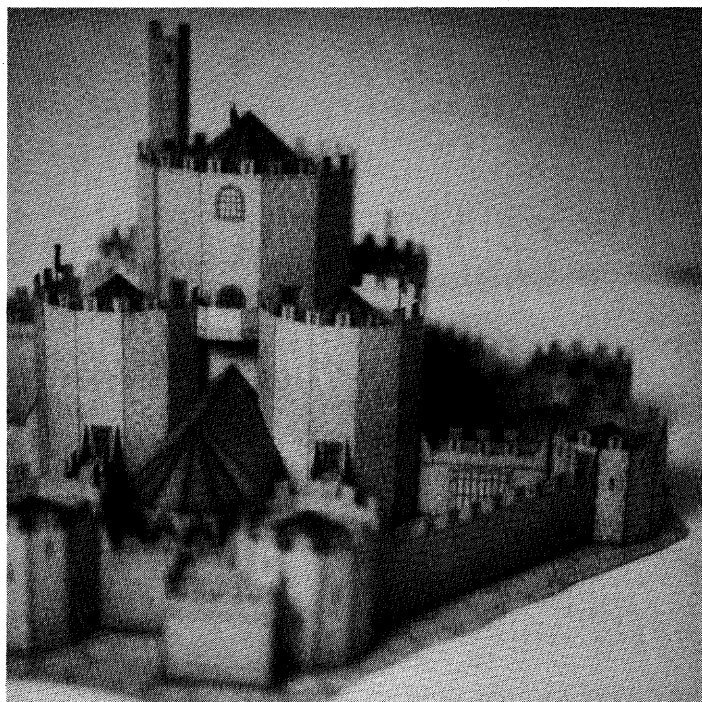
Certain other conveniences are built into the complex, such as a dumbwaiter from the kitchen to the upper levels. Unlike many castles, this one has plenty of fireplaces. Altogether, it is a very comfortable place.

First and second stories: These tower rooms and the wing containing the great hall serve to house the cloister for junior brothers, the better living quarters, classrooms, guestrooms for hospitality (a medieval duty), a laboratory, and a library. The main business of the community is carried on in these areas.

Third and fourth stories: On these floors are the living and working quarters of the officers of the community, the treasury, the meditation chapel, and so forth. Large window seats set in the tower walls are found throughout. A great solar (sunroom) with balconies is a major feature.

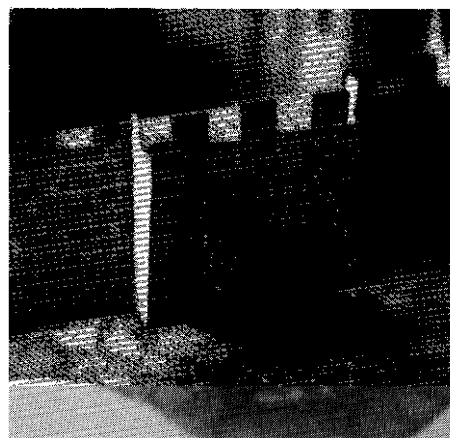
Upper levels: The open areas around the edges of the conical roofs atop the cloverleaf towers are used for various purposes: a carpenter's shop, a greenhouse, a smithy,

The closeup view at right shows the large central tower and two of the four towers that surround it. Atop flagpoles made from straight pins, pennants add a touch of color to the massive stone and wood structure. The detail photo below and to the right shows the draw-bridge, made more realistic-looking by attaching it to the gate with short pieces of small chain.



and an exercise area. The great central tower continues on up, giving further living and working space. On the very top of the central tower, beside its conical timber roof and close to the base of the watchtower, is a storage shed where astronomical equipment is kept.

Conclusion: It is perhaps no coincidence that Great Stoney resembles something like a beehive, for it is a tightly organized, packed community of very busy people. Well designed for defense, it nevertheless has many features for recreation and worship that one would not find in a secular lord's castle.



From concept to cardboard

The cardboard version of Great Stoney that you can construct from the parts in this magazine is not identical to the castle that's depicted in the accompanying floor plans. Rather than being a disadvantage or a weakness, that fact is an indication of how the creation process differs depending on how many dimensions you're working in.

When Arthur Collins drew up his original floor plans for Great Stoney, he based the two-dimensional construction on his extensive knowledge of how a castle is laid out and built. When Arthur's floor plans were rendered in pen and ink for publication, we adhered to the design in that form.

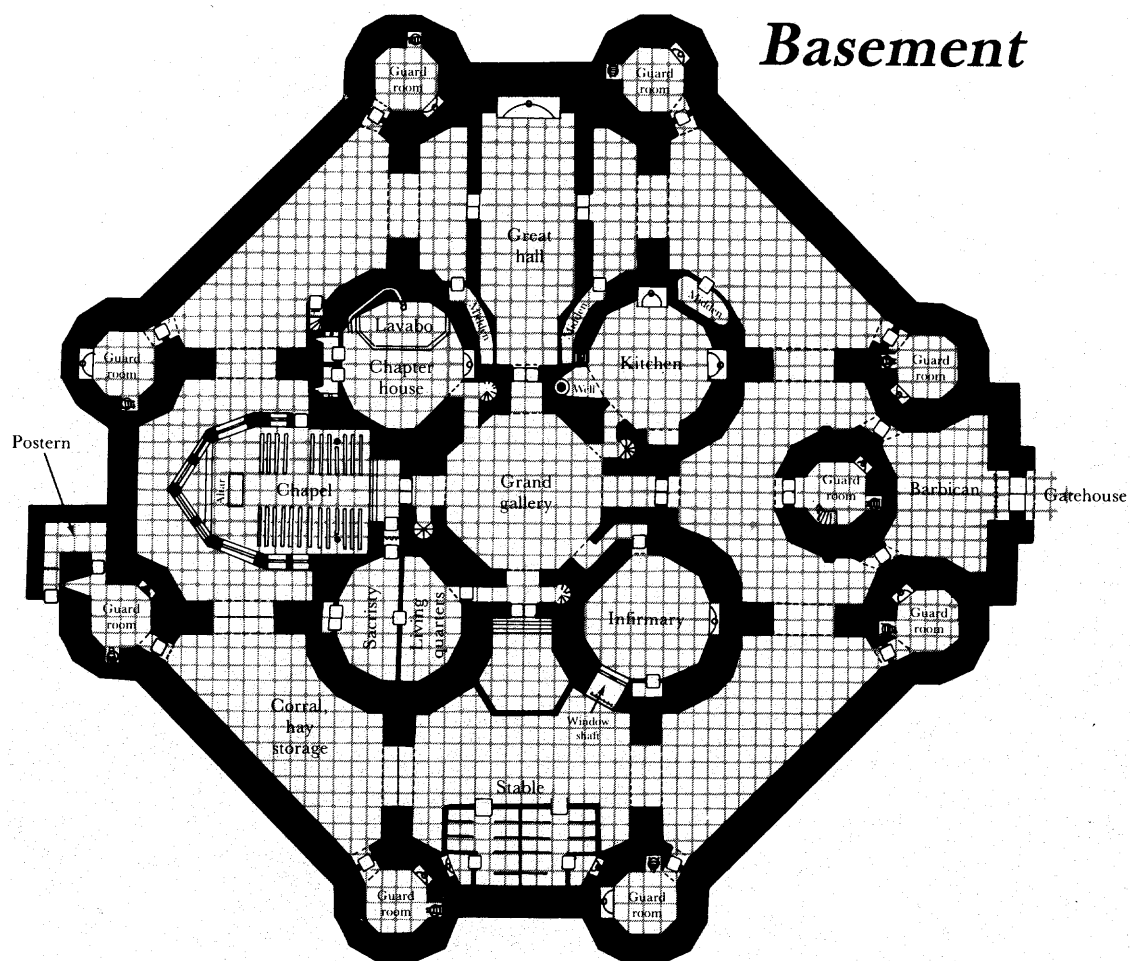
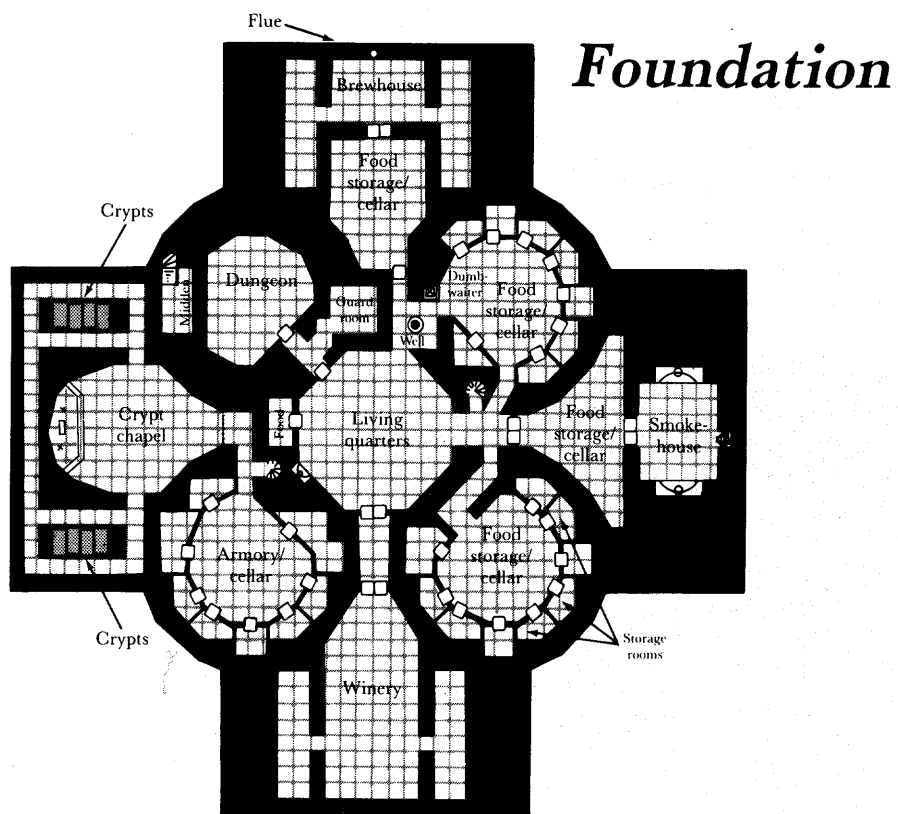
But when Dennis Kauth turned Great Stoney into a cardboard sculpture, he deemed it necessary to change some design elements. Certain things that "work" in a drawing on graph paper weren't feasible or even possible to translate into parts that would fit together properly and could be squeezed onto four sheets of cardboard.

For instance, the walls of the cylindrical towers are thick in the drawings, but in cardboard they're only as thick as the cardboard itself. It would have been possible to construct thick-walled towers in cardboard by nesting one cylinder inside another, but that would have taken more space on the sheets than we had available — and it would have meant twice as many crenellations for you to cut out.

Arthur's design included flying buttresses that extended from the cloverleaf section down to the outer towers. In an actual stone construction, the buttresses would be essential to keep the massive center section from collapsing outward under its own weight. In cardboard, the parts would have been difficult to form and assemble; they would serve no structural purpose, since the center towers stand up quite well all by themselves; and again, there was the problem of space on the sheets. So . . . no flying buttresses (unless you make your own).

The roofs of the four cloverleaf towers were designed as flat surfaces, but Dennis supplied conical timber roofs for them similar to the ones on the outer towers and the center tower. One of the main reasons for this was aesthetic — "to give it a little color," in Dennis's words. If you want those towers to have flat timber roofs, leave off the timber cones and use markers or brown paper to color in the center of each roof section so that it looks like a flat timber surface instead.

Despite the minor differences between them, the floor plans and the cardboard structure can be used in conjunction with each other as a gaming aid, to help monitor the location of people and objects within the complex. In most cases where the floor plans and the sculpture are in conflict over a specific point, the floor plans should be considered the final authority — unless, of course, you have a reason for deciding in favor of the opposite viewpoint.



How it all goes together

I. THE BASICS

In addition to this copy of **DRAGON®** Magazine, you'll need:

- A 12-inch ruler or straightedge, preferably metal.
- A pair of sharp, pointed scissors, not too big (so you can wield them easily).
- A modeling knife with a sharp blade.
- A tube or bottle of high-quality glue for paper.
- A ball-point pen (one without ink is okay) or some other object to be used as a stylus for scoring along fold lines.
- Paper clips, spring-type clothespins, or similar items that can be used to hold parts together while the glue dries.
- A few straight pins.

1. Separate the two large sheets of cardboard from the center of the magazine. The best way to do this without damaging the paper is to pry up the ends of the staples, lift out the sheets, and then push the staples back down to hold the rest of the pages together.

2. Cut the pages apart into smaller sections for easier handling. Cut out the base first; this is the part that will hold all of the others, except for the small outbuildings (which have their own small bases).

3. Cut out the individual parts of the castle, one at a time as needed; notice that parts and groups of parts are numbered in the order of assembly. If you have a steady hand, you can use scissors for most of the long and straight edges. To cut out small detailed areas, such as the crenellations on the tops of the walls, a modeling knife and a straightedge to guide it are the best tools for true and accurate cuts.

4. Using the stylus and straightedge,

score each part along the black lines to make folding easier. (The black lines are only printed on the colored surface, but if you score the parts on that surface the colors might "break up." It's safest to do the scoring on the non-printed side, as long as you line up the straightedge carefully before scoring each line.)

5. Fold each part so that it forms the three-dimensional shape it's supposed to, then apply glue to the surfaces that will touch (only one surface, or both, depending on the kind of glue you use) so the part will stay in that shape. Refer to the schematic drawings to see how certain types of parts are constructed. If you're using a fast-setting glue, be sure the parts are aligned properly the first time you touch the connecting surfaces. If you're using a slow-setting glue, you may find it handy to clamp surfaces together with paper clips or clothespins until the glue dries.

6. Attach each part in its proper place, either on the base or on another part. Put down the center tower first, then the "cloverleaf" towers around it, then the great hall (location #3), then the chapel (#4) and so on, working your way toward the perimeter of the castle. Attach small parts as you go along to avoid being hemmed in later by other parts; for instance, put the doors on the great hall before gluing down the two walls that run parallel to the hall.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

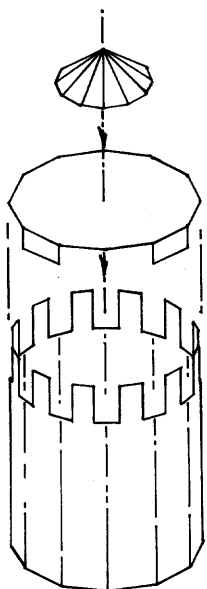
Doors: Many of the doors of Great Stoney are designed to be shown in the opened position. Each of the open-door pieces is actually half of a door. As you cut each one out, fold it in half and glue it to make a piece that's colored on both sides

(see the diagram). Then, using a very small amount of glue, attach each half to the side of an open doorway. The door halves labeled 3 go at the base of the central tower and on the great hall. The door labeled 1 is for the doorway leading from the central tower to the roof of part #5. The doors labeled 9 go at the base of each of the outer wall towers.

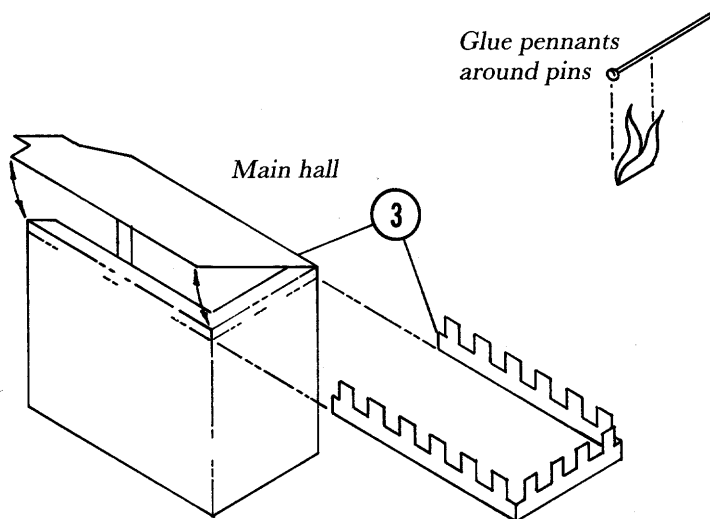
Outbuildings: Because a castle often had such things in its vicinity (and because we had a little extra room on the cardboard sheets), we've provided three outbuildings, each in one piece, that can be folded and attached to their own small bases and then displayed outside the castle walls in any location you choose.

Balconies: The parts labeled B (on the sheet containing the base) are used to form the balconies that jut off the central tower along the tops of the cloverleaf towers. For added support and to be sure they're aligned properly, it's best to attach them after the cloverleaf towers are in place.

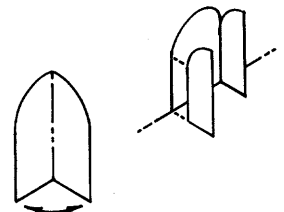
Tower roofs: Most of the flat roof sections that fit inside the cylindrical tower pieces should be fixed to the insides of the cylinders so that each roof is about 1/16 inch below the battlement. Exceptions are the roofs on the cloverleaf towers, which fit somewhat lower inside the cylinders so they'll be at the right height when the cloverleaf towers are fitted against and under the central tower. Whenever you're not sure how two pieces are supposed to fit together, try them on for size before applying any glue. The conical timber roof on each tower is designed to fit over the uncolored area in the center of the flat roof piece — there is no need to cut out the uncolored sections, and the structure will be weakened if you do

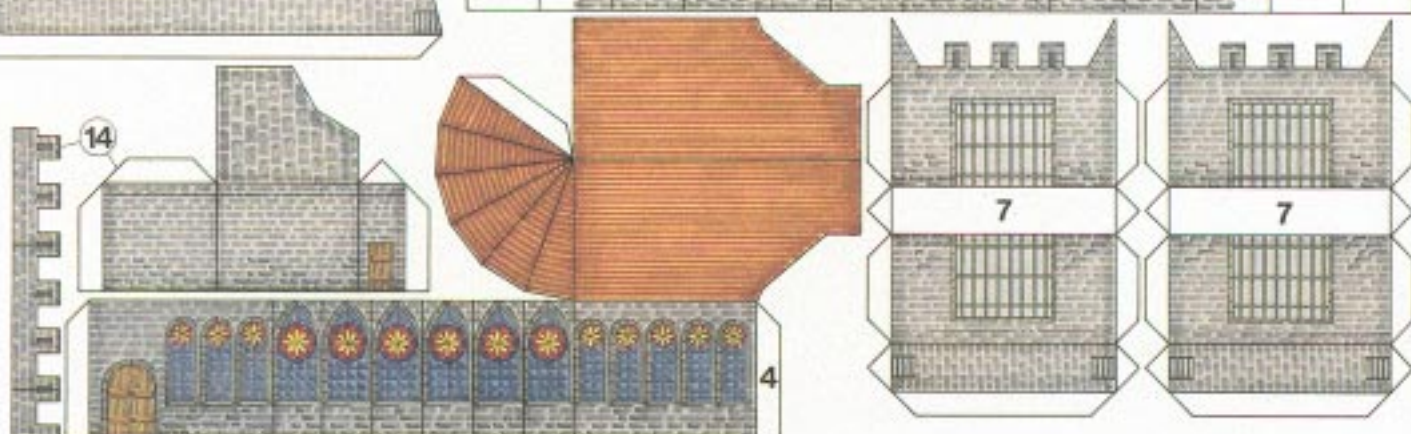
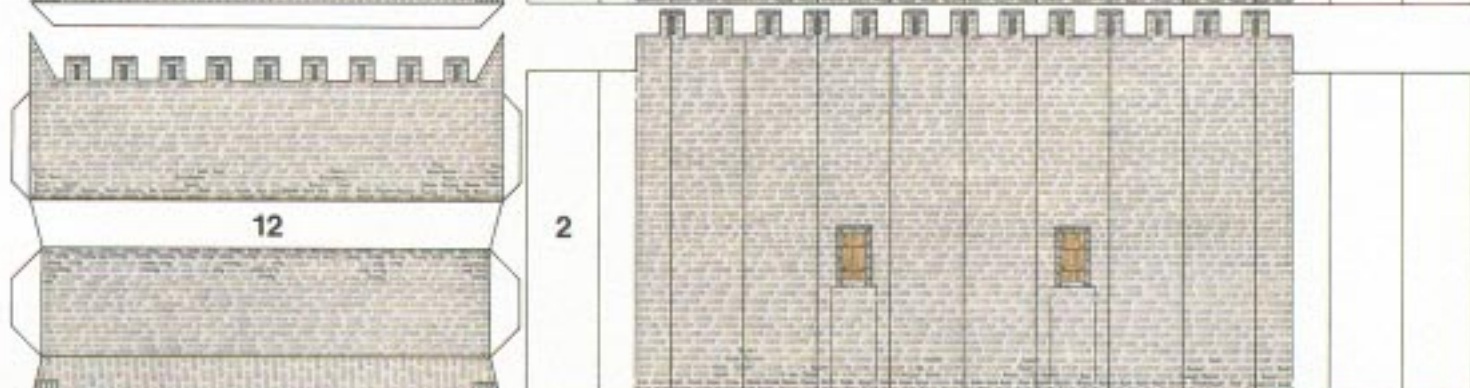
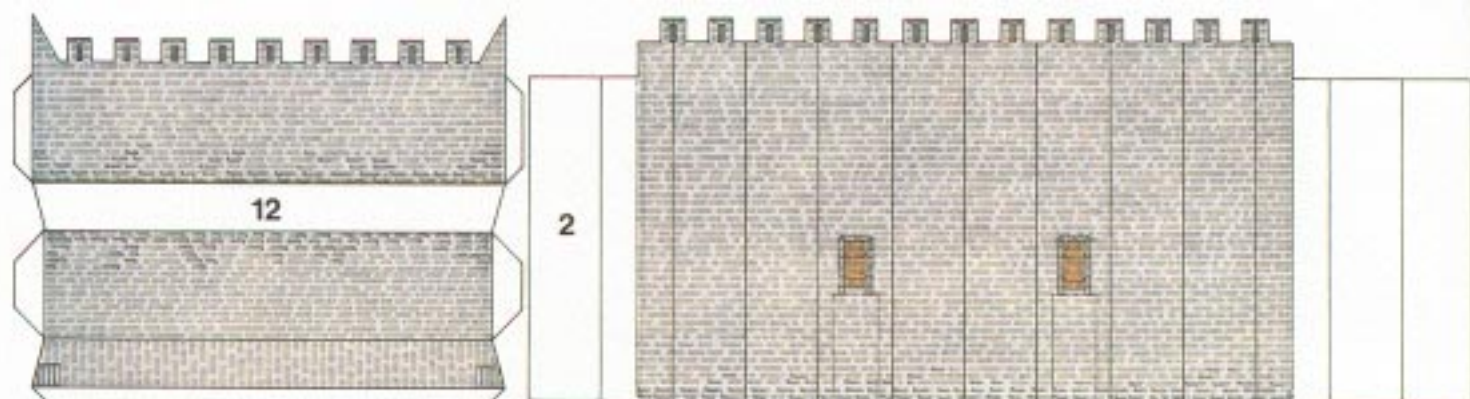


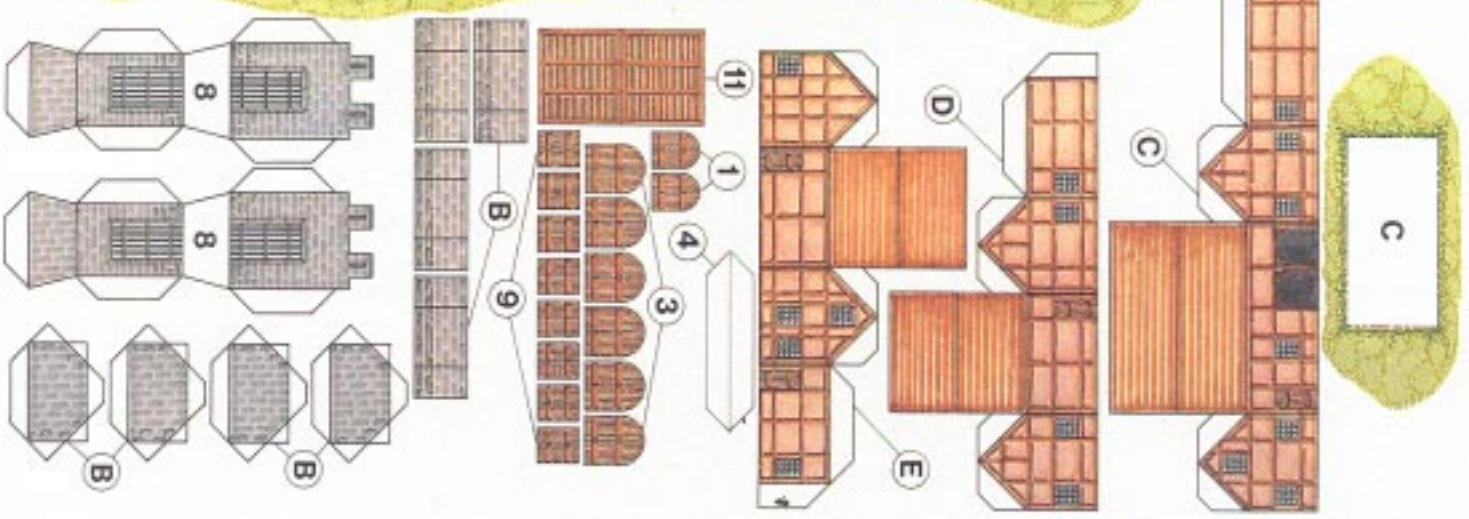
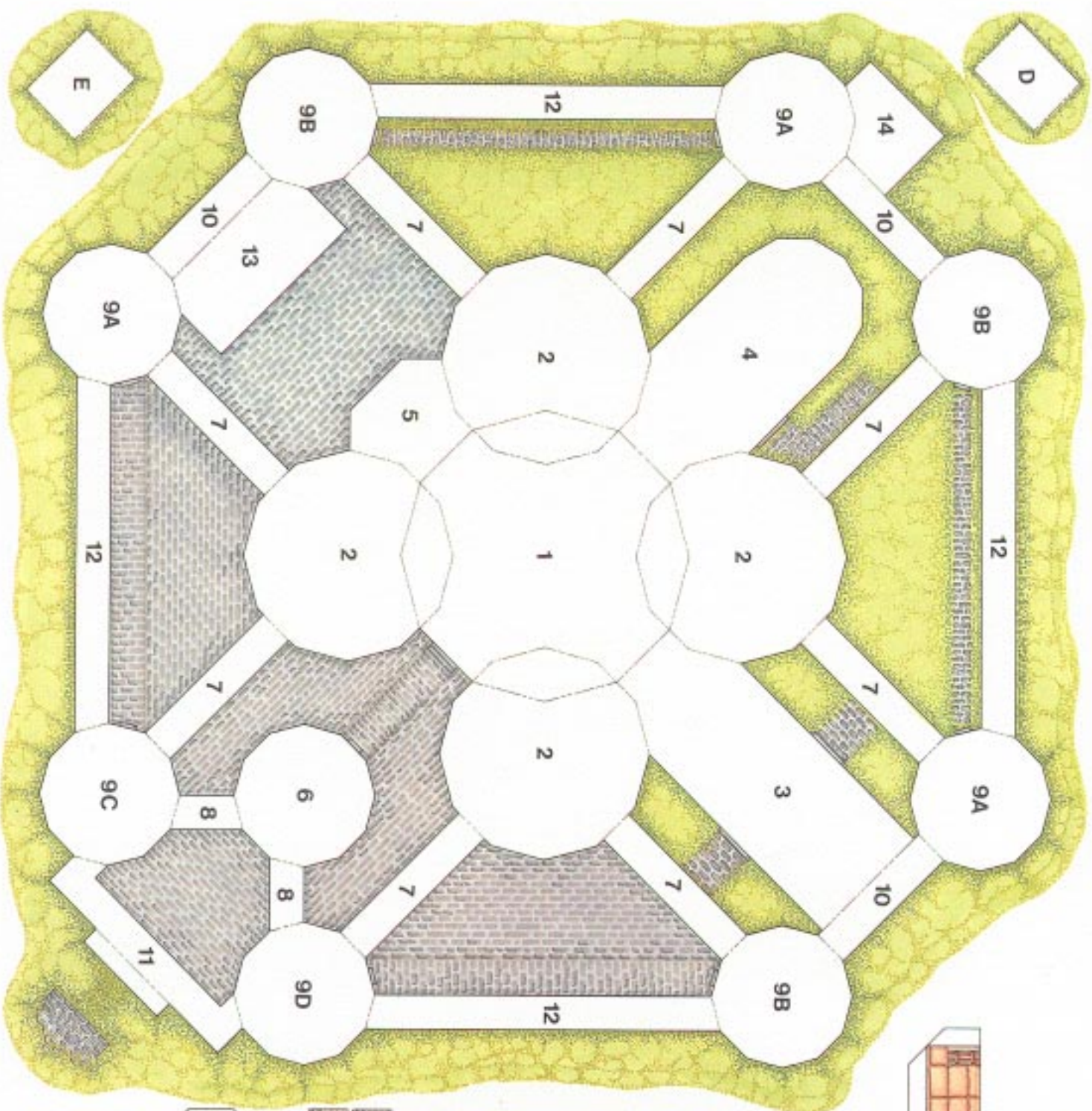
Typical three-piece tower

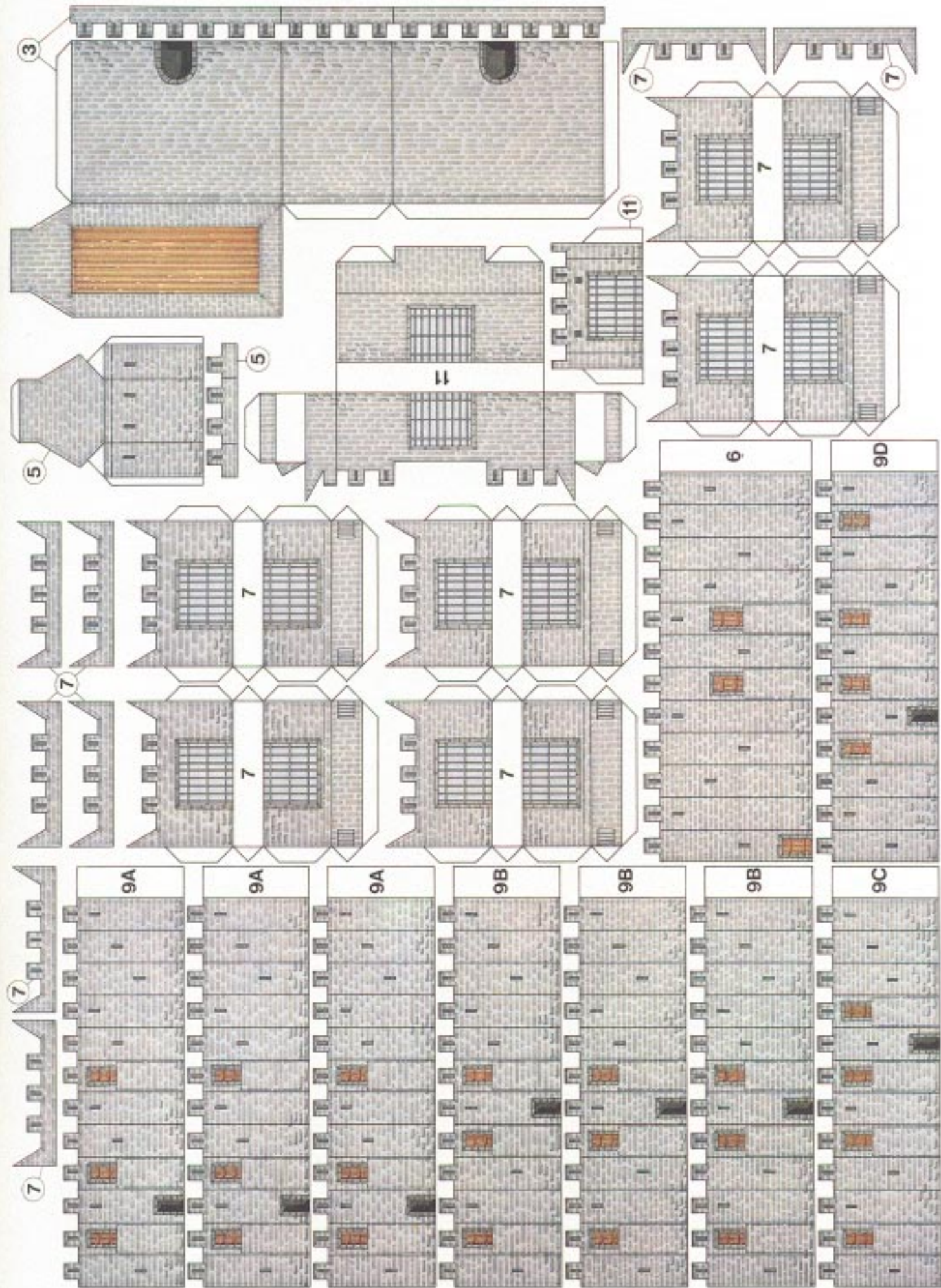


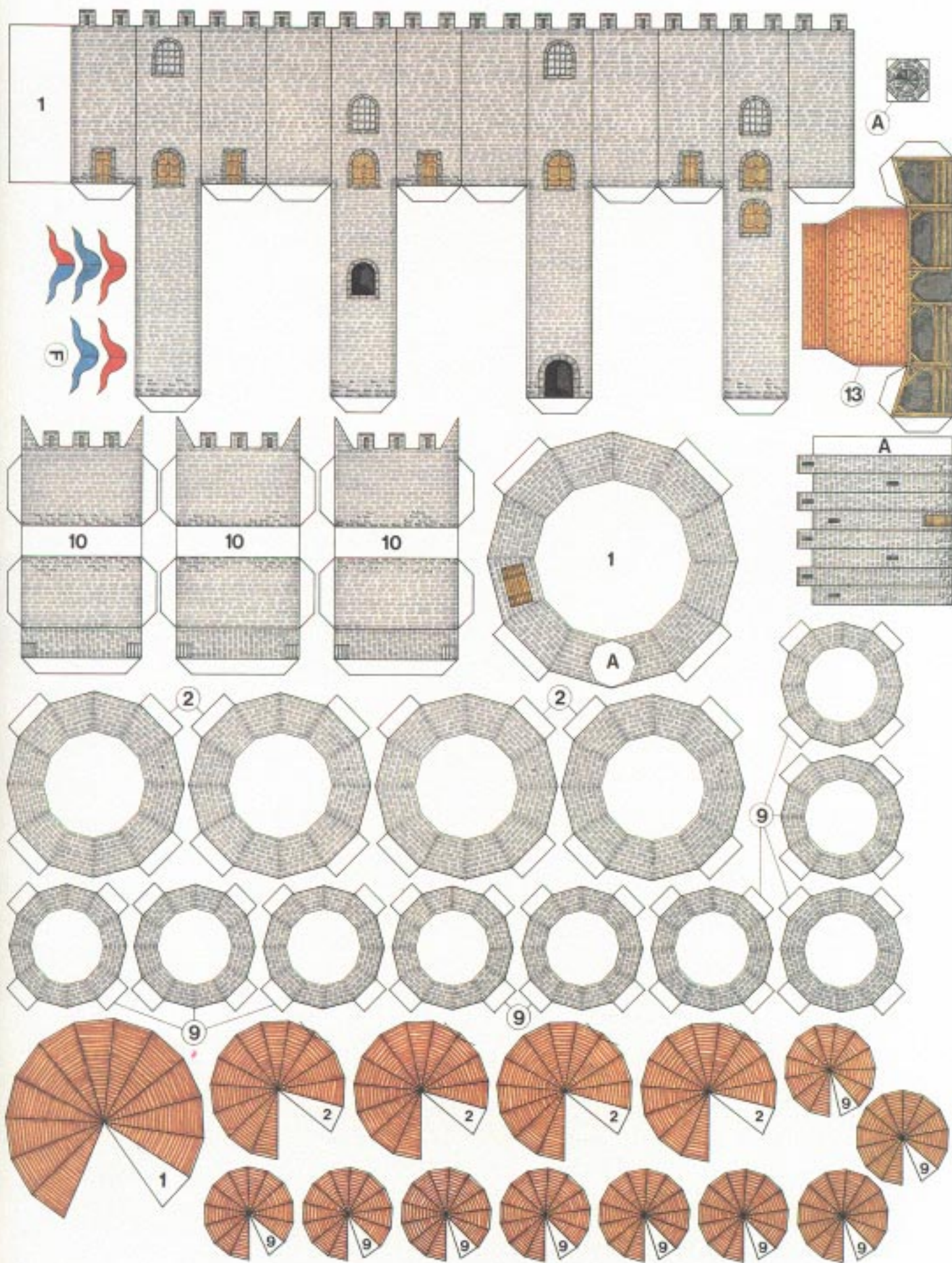
Fold doors in half,
then attach to doorways



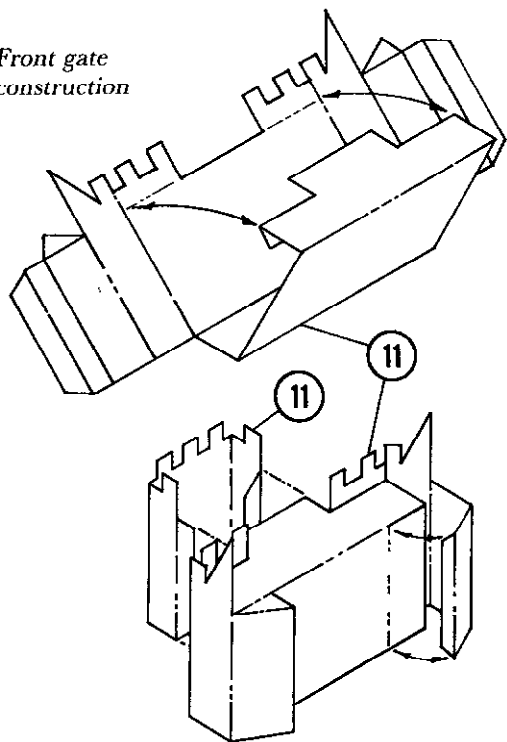




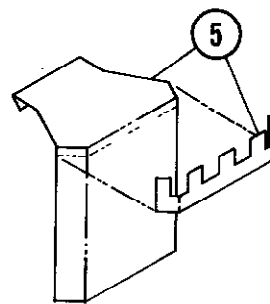




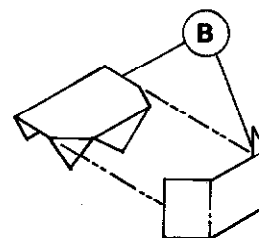
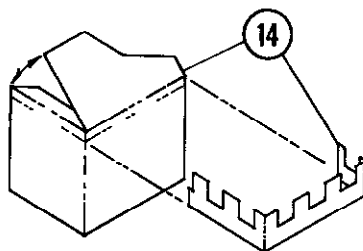
Front gate construction



Balconies
(attach sides
before final
assembly)



Postern gate



so. Each of the timber roofs on the clover-leaf towers is marked with a small notch that must be cut out to make the roof fit snugly against the central tower.

ADVANCED TIPS

Anyone who's experienced at scratch-building and detail work will think of several ways to make Great Stoney even more realistic-looking. Here are a few of the ideas we've thought of, including some things that were incorporated into the prototype model shown in the photographs.

With a couple of pieces of small chain and four straight pins, you can build the drawbridge (door part #11) in a partly

opened position, as in the prototype. Cut the chain to fit, then "bolt" it to the door and the wall with straight pins, clipping off the shaft of the pin with pliers or scissors. Wherever straight pins are used in the construction, try to get the type with colored heads that will match the color of the part the pin is used with.

The pennants fluttering from the higher towers are made by folding and gluing each paper pennant around a straight pin, then poking the pin through the black dot in each roof piece. To keep the pins at the proper heights, stick each one in the roof and fix it in place with a spot of glue before attaching the roof to the tower. For added realism and

a custom touch, design your own pennants, and try cutting them out of cloth — but first, seal the cloth with liquid glue to keep the edges from fraying.

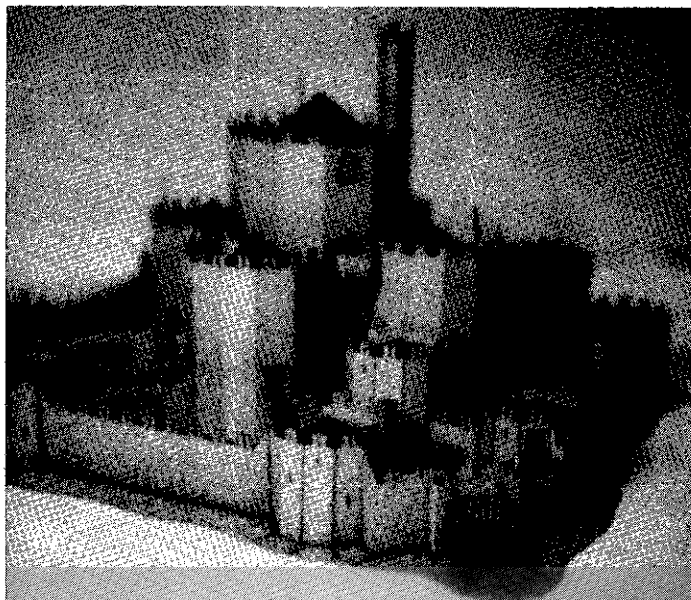
By working very carefully, you can cut out any doors or windows you think should be opened; likewise for the portcullis gates along many of the walls. Simulate bars and latticework with thin wire attached to the inner surfaces of the wall or tower in question. As with many detailing projects, you should finish this work before proceeding with the construction of the part being detailed — for instance, it would be very tough to cut out the windows on the central tower after the central tower is attached to the base.

The stable area offers several opportunities for detailing. You can build hitching posts from toothpicks, and feed troughs from cardboard or balsa. Use flocking material or fibers of twine, or check out the spice and herb rack in the kitchen, for something that looks like straw.

Because the printed sheets are not colored on both sides, several uncolored areas will be visible on the finished product — particularly on the inside surfaces of walls and battlements. You can fix this by coloring those surfaces with a felt-tip marker in a shade of gray that will match the exterior. Markers will also be handy for covering up places on the exterior that get slightly damaged during construction.

As suggested in the section on the stable area above, you can build new parts and accessories for anything you consider appropriate. For instance, the roof of the central tower could use a three-dimensional storage

This photograph offers a good view of the main gate area. Three towers ring the main entrance, making it very difficult for hostile visitors to penetrate further into the castle grounds.

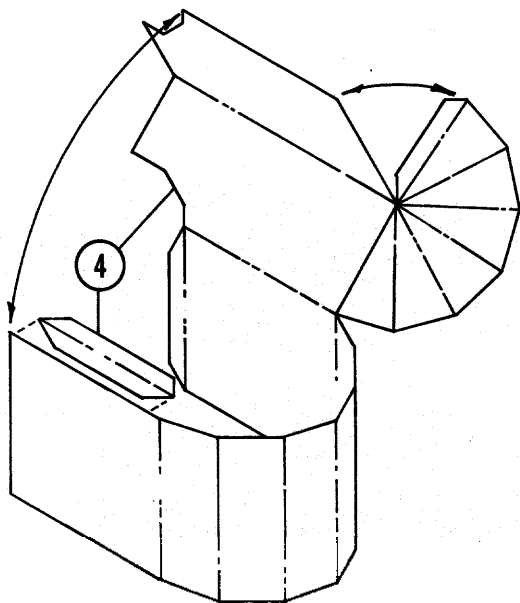


shed instead of the two-dimensional image shown on that surface. You could build sloping staircases from the walls to the tops of each of the outer towers. You may find good uses for small parts and bits of scenery from model railroad accessories.

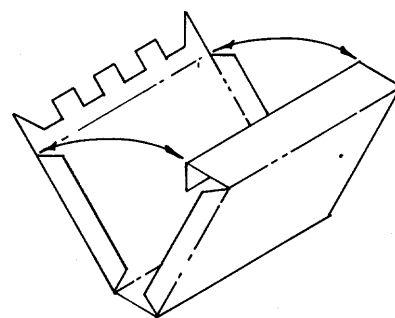
It is possible, but not recommended, to go so far as to cut out the arrow slits on the crenellations along the walls. Even if you can do this with precision, the hole that's left behind will make a flimsy part even flimsier. With any extra cutting or detail work you attempt, be sure you aren't losing more than you're gaining because you've created a structural weakness in the process.

When you've got Great Stoney looking the way you want it, spray the entire construction with a dull coat finish to give the castle an appropriate flat luster, add some strength, and cover up any glue spots that may have found their way onto the exterior surfaces. When you're done, Great Stoney will be useful as a gaming accessory (if anyone in your campaign is lucky enough to encounter — or own — such a grand place) or a display piece, either as the focal point of a diorama or sitting on a shelf all by itself.

Anyone with a fear of heights was probably not required to work a shift in the lookout tower, which extends three stories higher than the roof of the central tower and a dizzying 165 feet (at 15 feet per story) above ground level.



*Chapel construction;
note piece that
attaches to wall and roof*



*Typical wall piece;
glue sides first,
then top*

Where credit is due

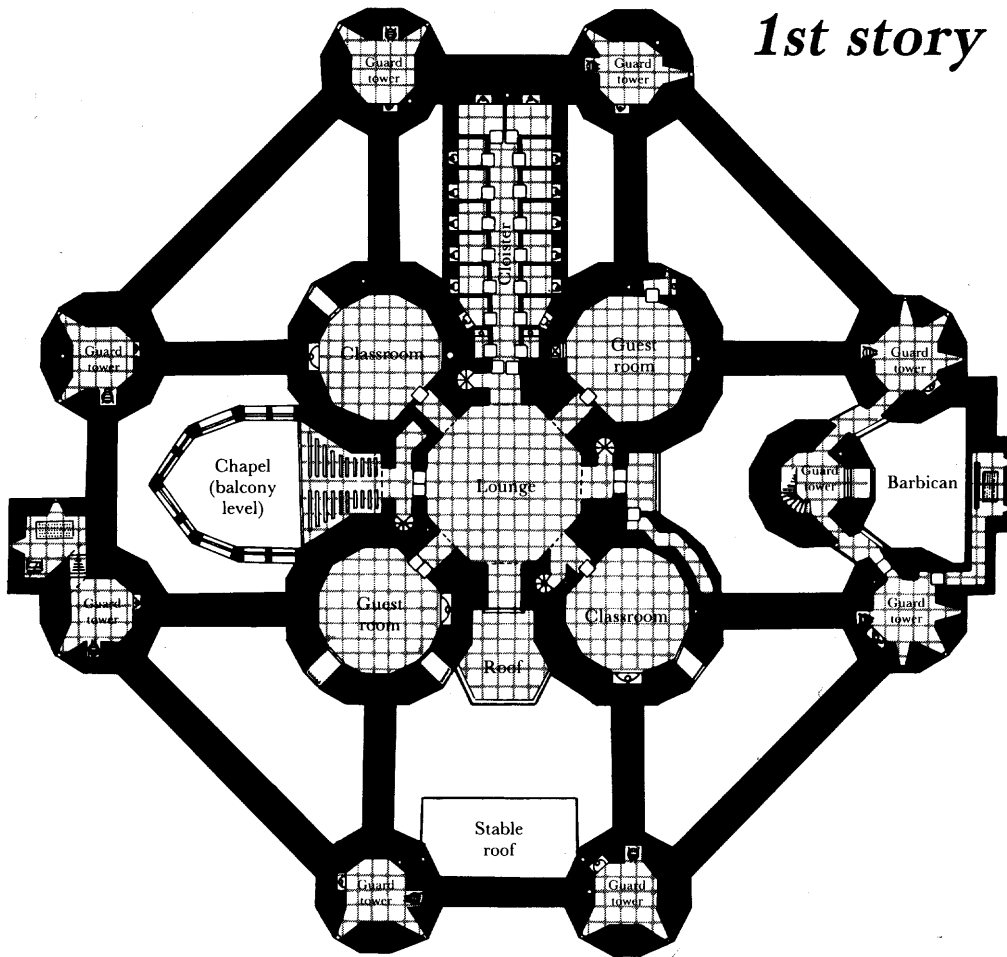
Original design and floor plans: Arthur Collins

3-D design and instructional drawings: Dennis Kauth

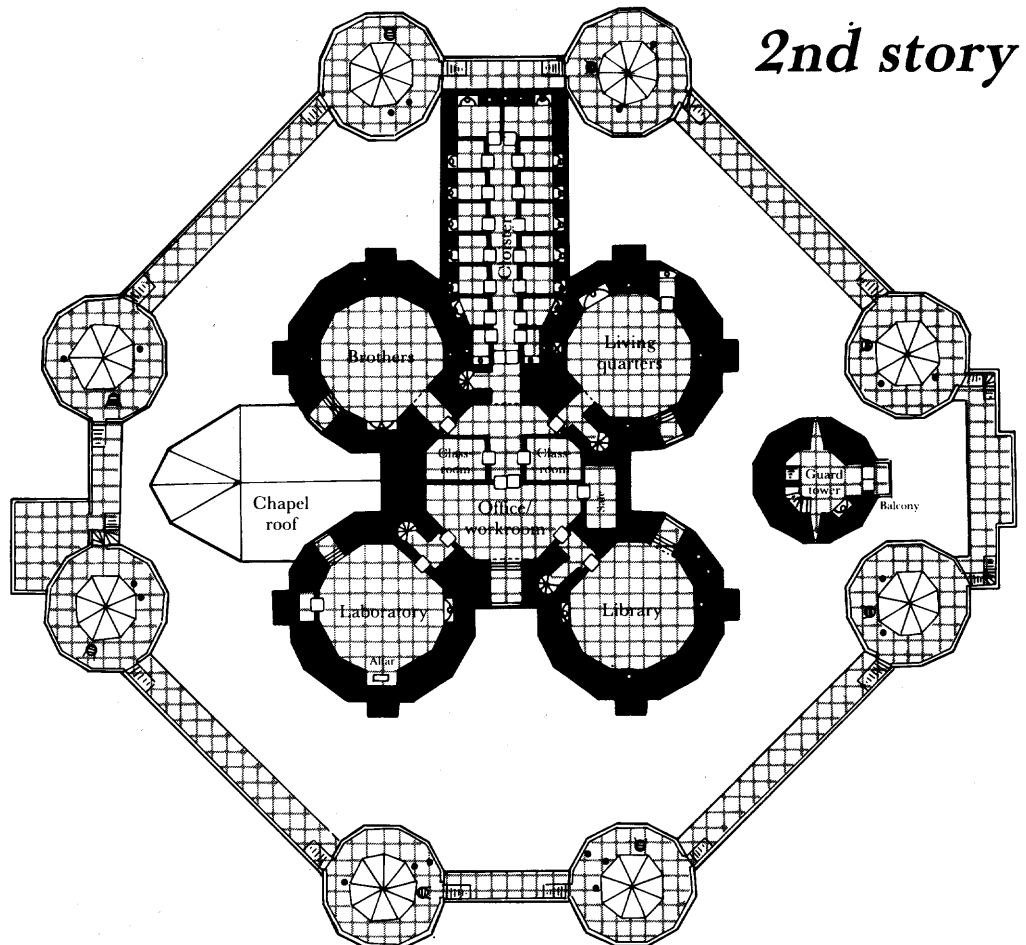
Graphic rendering: Roger Raupp

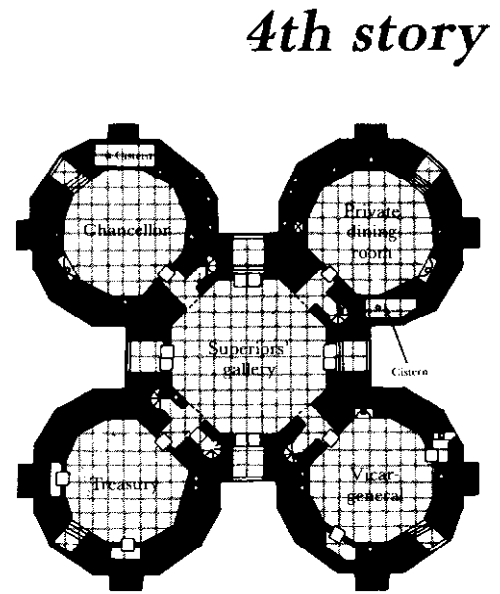
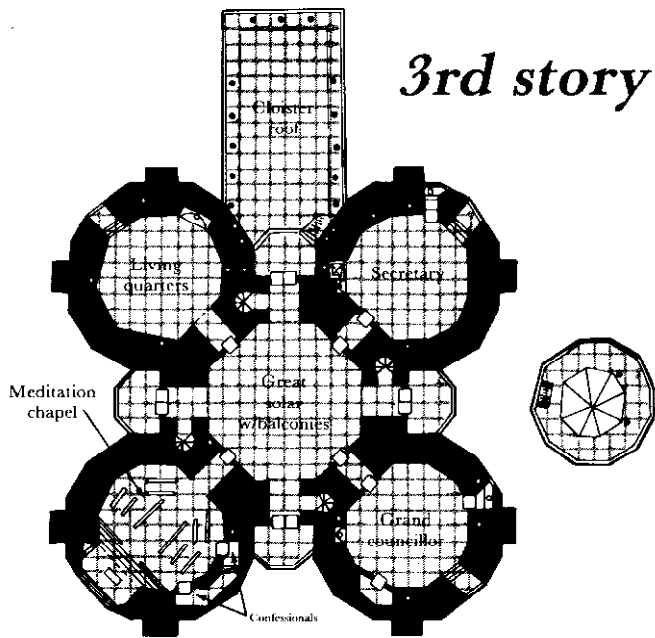
Everything Arthur didn't write: Kim Mohan

1st story

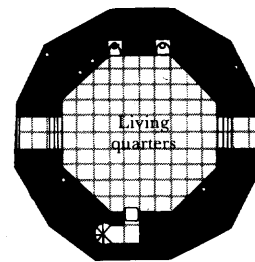
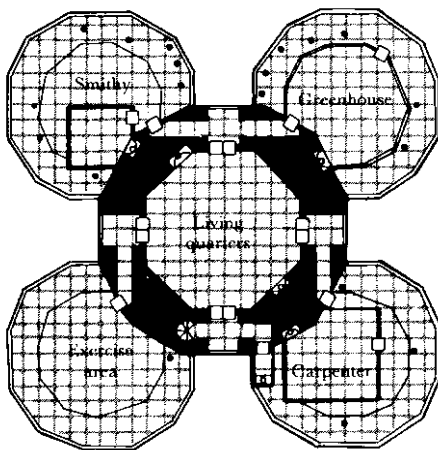


2nd story





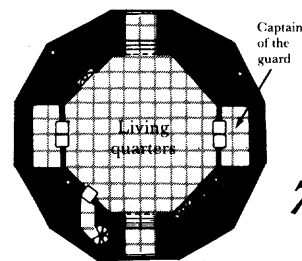
5th story



6th story



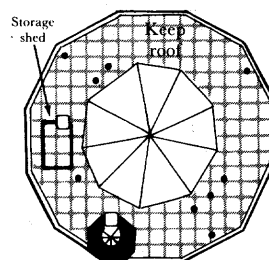
9th story



7th story



10th story



8th story

Scale: 1 square = 5 feet

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HUMANOID RACIAL PREFERENCES TABLE

Basic Acceptability Of Racial Types
Hill

Race	Bugbr.	Gnoll	Gob.	Giant	Hob.	Kob.	Ogre	Orc	Troll
Bugbear	P	T*	G	T	A*	A*	T	A*	N
Gnoll	T	P	A*	T	N	A*	G	T*	N
Goblin	G	A	P	N	T	G	H	N	A
Hill Giant	G	G	A	P	A	A	G	N*	T
Hobgoblin	T	N	N*	N	H**	A*	A	T*	H
Kobold	A	H	G	A	A	P	H	A	T
Ogre	T	T*	A*	G	A*	A*	P	T*	T
Orc	A	N	T*	A	N	A*	G	H**	H
Troll	A	N	A	T	H	T	N	A	N**

* Indicates that the race will bully and harass such humanoids.

** Assumes that the others of this race are of a rival tribe or family group.

Notes On The Table:

P: P indicates some preference and compatibility or even possible friendliness between them with appropriate co-operation.

G: G indicates that some *goodwill* exists, and so no hostility and some co-operation is possible.

T: T indicates the races can *tolerate* each other, and open hostilities are not likely to be evident.

N: N indicates *neutral negative* feelings on the part of these races, and that there will be no move to aid them if anything ill befalls.

A: A indicates *antipathy* and an active dislike which will break into open hostility if the opportunity presents itself. If *leaders or overseers are weak, these creatures will desert.*

H: H indicates *hatred*, possibly kept in check by fear, which will certainly break into open hostilities at the first opportunity, or else the hating humanoids will *desert at the first chance* if near a strong body of such hated creatures.

Use the table whenever humanoid troops are fighting or even serving side by side (within 12" of each other without any intervening troops or screen so that the other humanoids are visible). Have the troops behave according to the letter key.

CONSTRUCTION & SIEGE

UNDERGROUND CONSTRUCTION

As Dungeon Master you will be interested in the subject of dungeon building for two reasons. Most important is the work which will take place in various underground settings you devise for your players. Work will probably be in progress prior to their venturing into the labyrinth, during the course of their adventures therein, and even after they have moved on to some other project or task. Later, high level player characters will build their own strongholds, and they will desire some dungeon mazes thereunder. Although the volume of material given herein is by no means that of a text on mining, it should be more than adequate for quick and easy handling of the task in your campaign.

MINING: CUBIC VOLUME OF ROCK PER 8 HOURS LABOR PER MINER

Race Of Miner Working	Type of Rock Being Mined		
	Very Soft	Soft	Hard
gnoll, halfling, human	75'	50'	25'
gnome, kobold	80'	60'	30'
goblin, orc	85'	65'	30'
dwarf, hobgoblin	90'	70'	35'
ogre	150'	100'	50'
hill giant	250'	150'	75'
fire giant, frost giant	300'	200'	100'
stone giant	500'	350'	175'

Multiple Workers: For game purposes, assume that each extra miner will cause an appropriate additional volume of rock to be mined, providing that there is room in the shaft. Assuming that a typical shaft will be 10' wide, and arched to a 16' (or so) peak, including scaffolding, where appropriate, the

maximum number of miners, by race, per 10' wide shaft is shown below; increase the number for wider or narrower shafts accordingly, although any miner larger than man-sized needs a 10' minimum width in which to work.

Race	Maximum Number Per 10' Wide Shaft
dwarf, gnome, goblin, halfling, kobold	16
hobgoblin, human, orc	12
gnoll	8
ogre	6
giant, any type	4

Multiple Shifts: There is no reason to limit work to one-third of the day. If there is need, construction can be carried on 24 hours per day, as long as there are enough fresh workers every 8 hours to do so. No worker may toil more than 8 hours per day.

Natural Area: Where natural passages and cave/cavern space exists, there can be no work, or minor work only to straighten, enlarge, or whatever. Computing the amount of rock necessary to be mined for such passages or spaces is no great matter. The existence of such natural areas is another matter altogether. You can always assume that the basically subterranean races of creatures discover such natural cave areas and select them purposely. For player characters, you might wish to allow the following chances for finding a natural cave area:

Type Of Rock Being Mined	Chance for Natural Space
limestone (very soft)	1 in 10
other sedimentary rocks (soft)	1 in 50
lava (hard)	1 in 20
other igneous rocks (hard)	1 in 100

The size of such natural areas will typically be small to very large and with many passages in the case of limestone only. Igneous rock areas will be short passages or small caves only. Lava area spaces will tend to be tubes, often fairly large and long. Other sedimentary areas will be smallish and not extensive.

General Note: As a rule, player characters will not be able to get races of creatures such as kobolds, hobgoblins, orcs, gnolls, ogres, and giants to perform mining labor. These creatures would far rather steal, rob, and kill for their income. Fear of enslavement will sometimes prove successful for a time, but guarding the unwilling miners, and the hard task of getting them to work at their optimum rate will be difficult problems for the taskmaster. Miners have tools, which make quite efficient weapons, so 1 comparable guard per 4 workers is about the minimum. Slave or unwilling labor is from 50% to 80% as efficient, depending on how many foremen are on hand to watch and drive the laborers. If 1:16, efficiency is 50%, if 1:12 it is 60%, 1:8 means 70%, and 1:4 brings efficiency to 80% normal. Thus, for every 4 unwilling miners there must be a guard and a supervisor. Of course, if ogres were doing the work, the guard and the task master would have to be equal to ogres in hit dice/power — 4th level fighters or ogres, or comparable, for example.

CONSTRUCTION TIME

Earth Excavation: The cost of the ditch 100' in length, 10' deep, and 20' wide assumes that a crew of 3-4 men work for six weeks. If soil is heavy clay, time will be doubled.

Stone Constructions: Fortress-like stone constructions take about one week per 10' cubic section. Adding 50% to the expenditure will double the rate of construction, but to triple the rate of construction, expenditure must be increased to 250% of the base cost — the maximum increase in construction rate. Normal stone buildings as shown on the cost list, require four months to construct, including interior work. All times assume building materials are on hand. Quarry work and transportation, if any, are additional cost and time factors. Architect costs are also additional.

Wood Constructions: Wooden buildings take approximately one-half the time it takes to construct similar buildings with stone. Wooden hoardings, for example, can be built at the rate of a 10' section per day.

There are so many variable factors involved that the times given for completion of any given construction must be vague. If you do not wish to spend undue amounts of time calculating, it is suggested that you use the following rough estimates for construction time:

Moat house, shell keep, small castle	1 year + 2-8 months
Small castle with outer and inner walls, medium castle	2 years + 1-6 months
Medium castle with outer and inner walls, large castle	3 years + 2-8 months
Large concentric castle, walling average town	5 years + 1-12 months

Times assume that an architect has prepared plans in advance, and that normal costs are expended in construction. If additional monies are spent, time is reduced as noted for stone constructions. With respect to walling urban areas, citizens who willingly labor to speed construction will reduce time by 50%.

CONSTRUCTIONS

Construction	Cost in G.P.
Arrow slit	3
Arrow slit, crossletted	5
Barbican	4,000
Bartizan, 10' d., 20' h.	300
Batter, plinth or splay	50
Battlement, 14' l.	20
Building, stone	500
Building, wood	200
Buttress, stone, 3' w., 5' d., 10' h.	15
Catwalk, wooden, 10' l.	10
Ditch, 100' l., 10' d., 20' w.	100
Door, iron, 4' w., 7' h.	100
Door, secret, 2' w., 4' h.	50
Door, trap, 2' w., 3' l.	2
Door, wooden, 4' w., 7' h.	10
Door, wooden, reinforced, 4' w., 7' h.	25
Drawbridge, 10' w., 15' l.	400
Embrasure shutters	3
Gatehouse, stone	2,000
Hoardings, wooden, 10' l.	10
Machicolation, stone, 10' l.	100
Merlon, 4' w., 3' d., 5' h.	6
Merlon, pierced with arrow slit, 4' w., 3' d., 5' h.	10
Moat, 100' l., 10' d., 20' w.	250
Murder hole	10
Palisade, wooden, 100' l., 10' h.	100
Parapet, stone, 10' l.	10
Pilaster, 5' w., 3' d., 10' h.	25
Pit, 5' cube	4
Portcullis, 10' w., 15' h.	500
Rampart, earth, 100' l., 10' h.	100
Stairs, stone, 10' rise, 3' w.	50
Stairs, wooden, 10' rise, 3' w.	10
Tower, round, 20' d., 30' h.	850
Tower, round, 30' d., 30' h.	1,350
Tower, round, 40' d., 30' h.	1,600
Tower, square, 10' sq., 30' h.	600
Tower, square, 20' sq., 30' h.	900
Tower, square, 30' sq., 30' h.	1,200
Tunnel, underground, 5' w., 8' h., 10' l.	100
Wall, bastion, 5' w., 20' h., 40' l.	500
Wall, curtain, 10' w., 20' h., 100' l.	1,000
Window, shuttered, 2' w., 4' h.	7
Window, shuttered & barred, 2' w., 4' h.	10

Arrow slit: Each arrow slit assumes a space behind it in which the bowman stands, 1/2' w., 4' l.

Arrow slit, crossletted: As the name implies, this is a straight slit with a cross slit for crossbows.

Barbican: The barbican is a solid stone outwork with two 30' diameter by 30' high round towers and a connecting building 20' wide by 30' long by 20' high. It must be properly pierced and battlemented. The barbican can include a gate or can be a simple outwork.

Bartizan: This is a small tower built to provide flanking fire on curtain walls or as an additional firing platform.

Batter, plinth or splay: These terms describe a sloping support which strengthens wall or tower bases, hindering attack by machine or humans.

Battlement: These are the parapet (or sill), embrasures, and merlons set atop a wall to provide cover for bowmen. If the surface is not broad, a catwalk (q.v.) must also be constructed. A 14' section of battlement will typically have two 4' wide merlons and two embrasures 3' wide.

Building, stone: This is a single course (1' thick) of dressed or field stone with 120' of outside walls 20' high, with two wooden floors (second and attic), two flights of stairs, a peaked roof, and one wooden door. Cellar excavation, ground flooring, windows, interior walls, and additional doors are extra. The cost to increase wall thickness is 10% of initial cost per course of stone (1' thickness). Thus, the building upgraded to 10' thick walls (and appropriate outer dimensions) would cost 500 G.P. plus 90%, or a total of 950 gold pieces. The cost of a stone building can be used for computing interior dungeon walls.

Building, wood: This is the same as stone building above, but walls are framed with planks, total thickness 1/2'.

Buttress, stone: This is a wall support generally used for reinforcing the outside surface of a curtain wall, tower, etc. To buttress a wall up to 20' height, the equivalent of three buttress sections is needed.

Catwalk: This is a sturdy platform about 3' wide which is built upon a wall or palisade to enable defenders to shoot or fight over the top of the construction.

Ditch: This is a trench excavated as an obstacle, with sloped, compacted, and sodded sides. If a rampart of earth is built immediately above one side of a ditch the cost of the rampart is only 20% of the amount shown. The cost of ditching can be used for computing the cost of excavating for cellars, basements, dungeons, etc.

Door, iron: An iron door is typically set into stone with three long hinges/ supports. It consists of plates about one inch thick bolted to a frame about one-half that thickness. The cost of larger or smaller or thicker doors is 2 g.p./sq. ft. of one-half inch iron added to or subtracted from the basic door cost. It has an iron bar on one side.

Door, secret: This is a stone portal which operates by counter-poise or pivot, with a hidden mechanism to trigger operation. There is no reduction for smaller portals, and the cost for larger ones is 5 g.p. per square foot of increased size.

Door, trap: This is a stout wooden door about two inches thick set into a floor. It is raised by an iron ring which is constructed as part of the trap door. Each additional square foot of trap door costs 1 s.p.

Door, wooden: This is a sturdy door of hardwood (maple, ash, etc.) about three inches thick. A square foot of additional wood (or for less wood) in the door is 2 s.p. The door is barred on one side by a two-by-four.

Door, wooden, reinforced: This is a stout oaken door, four inches thick, bound with iron bands and secured by a 3x6 oaken bar. Each square foot of alteration is valued at 5 s.p.

Drawbridge: This is a bridge of six-inch thick hardwood planks bound with iron and attached to great chains which pass through the wall of the stronghold. These chains are used to raise the drawbridge by means of a winch and capstan bars and held fast by pawl and ratchet. Each 1 square foot alteration is valued at 2 g.p.

Embrasure shutters: These wooden pieces mask an embrasure. They are constructed in two sections, independent of each other, which rest firmly against the merlons on either side but swing out from the bottom to allow archery.

Gatehouse, stone: A gatehouse is a building of stone with walls 5' thick, two reinforced doors guarding a portal 10' wide by 12' high, a portcullis, and machicolated battlements atop the structure. It is 30' high to the battlement; the battlement is 7' high. The gatehouse has 140' of outer walls. Two barbettes cover its gate side.

Hoardings, wooden: This is a very stout wooden catwalk projecting in front of a wall. It has embrasures, a peaked roof connecting it to the battlement, and holes in the flooring to enable defenders to hurl and discharge missiles at attackers at the wall foot.

Machicolation, stone: This is a stone projection which moves the battlement out over the outer face of the wall. It has spaces in the stone flooring which allow missiles to be discharged to the space at the wall foot.

Merlon: A stone section rising above the parapet to provide cover for defenders atop a wall or tower is a merlon. The merlon can be pierced with a slit for additional missile power.

Moat: A water-filled ditch (properly packed and graveled in most cases) comprises a moat.

Murder hole: This is a slit, crossletted slit, or similar opening in a floor to command a passageway below. In combination with inner portcullis, inner wall slits, and pits, they make an entrance passage in a gatehouse or similar structure very unhealthy for attackers.

Palisade: A wooden fence of logs about six inches thick sunk into the ground from 4' to 6' forms a palisade. A palisade is usually built atop a rampart and equipped with a catwalk in order to turn the upper portion into a parapet.

Parapet, stone: This is a low stone wall 3' high and 3' thick (or deep) to provide cover for defenders. It is crenelated by placement of merlons.

Pilaster: This is a pillar-like reinforcement about as thick at its base as at its top.

Pit: A pit is a hole covered by a wooden or metal lid. The lid is removed when attackers threaten the work in which it is in. A pit is typically walled and floored with finished stone.

Portcullis: This is a grille of reinforced wooden or iron bars which is raised and lowered by counter-weights and winch. For each square foot of alteration adjust the cost by 2 gold pieces.

Rampart, earth: A rampart is a layered, packed, and sodden earthen wall, usually topped by a palisade. (See also **ditch**.)

Stairs, stone: Solid stone for the first 10' rise, the stone staircase must be buttressed if it rises beyond 10'.

Staircase, wooden: Typical stairs are built of sturdy hardwood.

Tower, round: A stone cylinder, without doors, arrow slits, or battlements, a round tower has one stone floor, a flat stone roof, and spiral stone stairs to the roof. The walls of 20' diameter towers are 5' thick, those of a 30' diameter tower are 6' thick, and those of a 40' diameter tower are 7' thick.

Tower, square: See **tower, round** above. A 10' square tower has walls 3' thick.

Tunnel, underground: A straight shaft generally used as an escape route, the underground tunnel is assumed to be dug through soft earth and floored, walled and roofed in rough stone. If it is dug through hard earth the cost will increase by 100%. If the tunnel is mined through solid rock the cost will be 500% of the figure shown.

Wall, bastion: This is a curved wall section, typically hemispherical, built into a curtain wall to provide flanking fire. It has no battlement.

Wall, curtain: This is a straight wall section without battlements. If it is built above 20' height it must be thickened or supported by buttresses, pilasters, etc.

Window, shuttered: A typical opening in a wall, it is covered by wooden shutters of one inch thickness.

Window, shuttered & barred: This is a typical window protected by a single bar with spurs to either side to prevent entrance through its aperture. Bars on wider windows can be multiples of the type above or crossbar gridded.

SIEGE ENGINES AND DEVICES OF WAR

Occasionally the need to handle various siege equipment and artillery will arise. While the conduct of largescale battles is not a subject for this work, the 1:1 use of such machines can be dealt with easily herein.

Engine or Device	Cost in G.P.
Ballista (or mangonel or scorpion)	75
Catapult, heavy	200
Catapult, light	150

Cauldron, suspended	50
Gallery, covered (or tortoise)	350
Hoist	150
Mantlet, movable	15
Ram	500
Ram catcher	20
Siege tower	800
Sow	500
Trebuchet	500

Ballista: A war engine which fires a heavy, spear-like missile. The cost of missiles for a ballista is comparable to javelin cost.

Catapult: An engine operating by tension or torsion which hurls heavy missiles. Combustibles, rocks, dead animals, barrels of sewage, etc. can be used as ammunition.

Cauldron, suspended: A huge iron pot for boiling or flaming liquid. It is suspended in such a manner so as to allow it to be tipped easily in order to spill its contents on attackers.

Gallery, covered: A sometimes movable construction, typically a heavy timber frame, with green hides protecting the wood. It has a double roof, one peaked to shed missiles and liquids. It is used to provide cover for attackers operating against a wall. Width is 12', height 12', length 20'.

Hoist: A frame with fulcrum and lever, the lever equipped at one end with a basket which can hoist up to 4 attackers to a height of 30' to assault a construction.

Mantlet, movable: A wooden wall, with wheels for movability, and a slit for archery. It is typically 6' wide, 8' long, and several inches thick. The mantlet is slanted backward at a slight angle.

Ram: A movable gallery equipped with a heavy log suspended from two roof beams by chains. The log is shod in iron and used to batter through defenses.

Ram catcher: A fork or hook of iron on a long pole. It is lowered by defenders to catch and hold a ram (or sow) at work on a wall. The defenders then raise the catcher to disable or break the ram.

Siege tower: A mobile wooden tower, typically a beam frame with slats and green hides to protect it from fire. It is 16' square at the base, 40' high, with a 10' square parapet at the top. At 30' height there is a drawbridge 10' square. The lower portion is for locomotion. A ladder leads up the back or interior to drawbridge deck and the upper parapet, with two intermediate floors.

Sow: A pick/screw device, otherwise conforming to the ram, for use against stonework.

Trebuchet: A large siege engine which fires very heavy missile loads a great distance by means of lever and counterpoise.

WAR MACHINE FIRE TABLES

Use the tables below to determine "to hit" probabilities whenever siege engines/war machines fire:

Device	Range		Damage		Rate of Fire	Crew	
	Min.	Max.	S-M	L		Min.	Max.
Ballista (scorpion)	¼"	32"	2-12	3-18	¼-½	2	4
Catapult, heavy	18"	36"	2-24	4-16	¼	6	10
Catapult, light (onager)	15"	30"	2-20	3-12	¼	4	6
Ram*	0"	¼"	9-16	7-12	½	10	20
Sow*	0"	¼"	9-16	13-24	½	10	20
Trebuchet	24"	48"	3-30	5-20	¼	8	12

* Damage possible only if victim is directly in front of the boom device (ram, pick, or screw).

Range is the distance from engine to target creature. The trajectory of ballista missiles is basically a flat one, while those from catapults and trebuchets have a high arch. Minimum range basically reflects arching trajectory. The range for

rams and sows is only the maximum swing of the boom and indicates the proximity of the engine housing to target (normally a construction).

Damage variable is self-explanatory.

Rate of fire can be achieved only with at least a minimum crew. If less than the minimum number of crewmen are available, then rate of fire drops to at best 50% of normal. The maximum number of crew enables a ballista to double its normal rate of fire. All other engines gain nothing (except less chance of dropping below minimum requirements for normal rate of fire) by having crew above minimum numbers shown.

Hit Determination:

Artillerists must operate all missile engines in order to allow them a chance to hit. (You may, at your option, allow fighters to opt to learn various artillery engines in lieu of normal hand weapons.) The level of the crew chief determines the chance "to hit", i.e. if a 0 level fighter, then the first column, if a 1st or 2nd level then the second level, etc. ALL TARGETS, REGARDLESS OF ACTUAL ARMOR CLASS, ARE CONSIDERED AS AC 0 FOR PURPOSES OF "TO HIT" DETERMINATION, EXCEPT BALLISTA TARGETS WHICH ARE ALWAYS CONSIDERED TO BE AC 10 IF EXPOSED TO SIGHT. If a direct hit is scored, determine damage according to target size.

I. Direct Fire Machines:

ballistae
mangonels
scorpions

II. Indirect Fire Machines:

catapults
onagers
trebuchet

Adjust the base number "to hit" by using the following tables of modifiers. Roll d20, and if the number equals or exceeds the adjusted base number, a hit has been scored.

Target Movement:

Stationary
Movement rate less than 3"
Movement rate 3"-12"

Bonuses and Penalties

+3
0
-3

Target Size:

Man size or smaller
Horse and rider size or small ship size
Giant size, small building or medium ship size
Medium building or large ship size
Large building, castle wall, etc.
Subsequent shots after initial rating shot (only if target is stationary)

Bonuses and Penalties

-2
0
+2
+4
+6
+4

Weather Conditions (Ships Only)

Calm
Light to moderate breeze
Strong breeze to strong gale
Storm

Bonuses and Penalties

+1
0
-2
-4

Type of Fire

Direct Fire

Bonus

+4

If a catapult or trebuchet miss occurs, go to the **GRENAD-LIKE MISSILES** section to find where the missile struck. Misses will always pass over, to the left, to the right, or fall short of the closest appropriate part of the target, even if this causes the missile to fall short or exceed the minimum or maximum range restrictions.

As noted in the **GRENAD-LIKE MISSILES** section, missiles from small catapults are considered to be of 1' diameter, those from trebuchets 2'. Ballista missiles are akin to spears.

Field Of Fire: The arc of fire of missile engines is as follows:

Ballista	45° left or right
Catapult, heavy	15° left or right
Catapult, light	30° left or right
Trebuchet	10° left or right

Intervening objects will not be likely to interfere with the flight of arched missiles from catapults or trebuchets, unless they impose themselves near the engine or the target. Thus, a trebuchet could arch its missile over a 40' high wall which was more than 6" distant from it and less than 6" from the target. As ballista missiles are on a flat trajectory, objects between the engine and the target will interrupt the flight path of these missiles.

Cover: Target creatures which can be seen only partially or which are totally unseen cannot be hit by catapult or trebuchet missiles in the normal manner. A target area must be named and the **GRENAD-LIKE MISSILES** determination is then used to find where the missile actually hits. Ballista fire is not possible when target is unseen. If they are partially visible, use the **MISSILE FIRE COVER AND CONCEALMENT ADJUSTMENTS**.

Siege Damage: The damage caused to constructions by the various engines, as well as that caused by various monsters and spells, is detailed under **SIEGE ATTACK VALUES** (q.v.).

SIEGE ATTACK VALUES

Means Of Attack	Points Of Damage Against			
	Wood	Earth	Soft Stone	Hard Rock
<i>Bigby's Clenched Fist</i>	1*	—	½*	¼*
Catapult missile, heavy	6	—	4	2
Catapult missile, light	4	—	2	1
<i>Dig</i>	—	10	—	—
<i>Disintegrate</i>	2	2	2	2
Earth elemental	2*	10*	2*	1*
<i>Earthquake</i>	5-60	5-30	5-60	5-30
<i>Fireball</i>	½**	—	—	—
Giant, cloud, stone, storm	3*	—	1*	½*
Giant, fire or frost	2*	—	1*	½*
Giant, hill	1*	—	½*	¼*
Giant-hurled boulder —	—	—	—	—
cloud, fire, or frost	4	—	2	1
stone or storm	6	—	4	2
Golem, iron	3*	1*	2*	1*
Golem, stone	3*	1*	1*	½*
<i>Horn of blasting</i>	18	6	8	4
<i>Lightning bolt</i>	½**	—	—	—
<i>Move earth</i>	—	20	—	—
Ram	1*	—	¼*	—
Sow (pick or screw)	½*	½***	½*	¼*
Treant	8*	2*	2*	1*
Trebuchet missile	8	—	5	3

*Damage shown is per round of attack by this mode.

**Damage shown is per level of the spell caster employing the spell, and assumes fire damage following; if the wooden target is protected by green hides, is wet, etc., reduce damage by 50%.

***Damage inflicted only if sow is equipped with a screw device.

Soft stone includes fired brick, limestone, sandstone. **Hard rock** is granite and similar material.

Additional Attack Forms:

Mining assumes that a tunnel will be driven under a construction, shored up, filled with combustibles, and then fired so as to burn out supports. If successful, this will breach a 10' wide section of curtain wall or cause 10 points of damage to other sorts of constructions.

Sapping assumes that workers, under protection of a gallery, for example, are able to dig away at earth or stone. This mode of attack is slow. To represent it, give it the damage done by a sow, but on a per turn, rather than per round, basis.

It is important that the reader understand that all values are representative only. The entire process of siege warfare would prove interminable in a campaign, so it has been speeded up here to force sallies and counter attacking or the fall of the fortress.

CONSTRUCTION DEFENSIVE VALUES

Construction	Defensive Point Value
Barbican	150*
Bartizan	25
Batter, plinth, or splay	20**
Battlement	12
Building, stone (per course)	10
Building, wood	8-16
Buttress	20**
Door, iron	10
Door, wooden	1
Door, wooden, reinforced	3
Drawbridge	10-15
Gate (double reinforced doors)	8-12
Gatehouse, stone	120
Hoarding, wooden	2
Merlon	10
Palisade, wooden	6-12
Parapet, stone	20
Pilaster	15**
Portcullis	12
Rampart	20***
Tower, round	40-80
Tower, square	30-50
Wall, bastion	40
Wall, curtain	20****
Window, shuttered	4
Window, shuttered & barred	12

* Excludes any values for gates or portcullis.

** All these defensive points must be destroyed before the construction supports can be affected, i.e., a tower with a batter is valued at 20 additional points.

*** Unaffected by missiles from catapults or from battering or picking.

**** This indicates the strength of a curtain wall 10' thick in an area 10' wide by 10' high; if a breach, rather than a hole, is desired, the wall must be destroyed from top to bottom.

SIEGE ENGINES AND DEVICES OF WAR DEFENSIVE VALUES

Device	Defensive Point Value
Ballista	2
Catapult, heavy	6
Catapult, light	4
Cauldron, suspended	2
Gallery, covered	10
Hoist	4
Mantlet, movable	3
Ram	12
Siege Tower	16
Sow	12
Trebuchet	8

CONDUCTING THE GAME**ROLLING THE DICE AND CONTROL OF THE GAME**

In many situations it is correct and fun to have the players dice such things as melee hits or saving throws. However, it is your right to control the dice at any time and to roll dice for the players. You might wish to do this to keep them from knowing some specific fact. You also might wish to give them an edge in finding a particular clue, e.g. a secret door that leads to a complex of monsters and treasures that will be especially entertaining. You do have every right to overrule the dice at any time if there is a particular course of events that you would like to have occur. In making such a decision you should *never* seriously harm the party or a non-player character with your actions. "ALWAYS GIVE A MONSTER AN EVEN BREAK!"

Examples of dice rolls which should always be made secretly are: listening, hiding in shadows, detecting traps, moving silently, finding secret doors, monster

saving throws, and attacks made upon the party without their possible knowledge.

There will be times in which the rules do not cover a specific action that a player will attempt. In such situations, instead of being forced to make a decision, take the option to allow the dice to control the situation. This can be done by assigning a reasonable probability to an event and then letting the player dice to see if he or she can make that percentage. You can weigh the dice in any way so as to give the advantage to either the player or the non-player character, whichever seems more correct and logical to you while being fair to both sides.

Now and then a player will die through no fault of his own. He or she will have done everything correctly, taken every reasonable precaution, but still the freakish roll of the dice will kill the character. In the long run you should let such things pass as the players will kill more than one opponent with their own freakish rolls at some later time. Yet you do have the right to arbitrate the situation. You can rule that the player, instead of dying, is knocked unconscious, loses a limb, is blinded in one eye or invoke any reasonably severe penalty that still takes into account what the monster has done. It is very demoralizing to the players to lose a cared-for-player character when they have played well. When they have done something stupid or have not taken precautions, then let the dice fall where they may! Again, if you have available ample means of raising characters from the dead, even death is not too severe; remember, however, the constitution-based limit to resurrections. Yet one die roll that you should NEVER tamper with is the SYSTEM SHOCK ROLL to be raised from the dead. If a character fails that roll, which he or she should make him or herself, he or she is FOREVER DEAD. There MUST be some final death or immortality will take over and again the game will become boring because the player characters will have 9+ lives each!

HANDLING TROUBLESOME PLAYERS

Some players will find more enjoyment in spoiling a game than in playing it, and this ruins the fun for the rest of the participants, so it must be prevented. Those who enjoy being loud and argumentative, those who pout or act in a childish manner when things go against them, those who use the books as a defense when you rule them out of line should be excluded from the campaign. Simply put, ask them to leave, or do not invite them to participate again.

Peer pressure is another means which can be used to control players who are not totally obnoxious and who you deem worth saving. These types typically attempt to give orders and instructions even when their characters are not present, tell other characters what to do even though the character role they have has nothing to do with that of the one being instructed, or continually attempt actions or activities their characters would have no knowledge of. When any such proposals or suggestions or orders are made, simply inform the group that that is no longer possible under any circumstances because of the player in question. The group will then act to silence him or her and control undesirable outbursts. The other players will most certainly let such individuals know about undesirable activity when it begins to affect their characters and their enjoyment of the game.

Strong steps short of expulsion can be an extra random monster die, obviously rolled, the attack of an *ethereal mummy* (which always strikes by surprise, naturally), points of damage from "blue bolts from the heavens" striking the offender's head, or the *permanent* loss of a point of charisma (appropriately) from the character belonging to the offender. If these have to be enacted regularly, then they are not effective and stronger measures must be taken. Again, the ultimate answer to such a problem is simply to exclude the disruptive person from further gatherings.

INTEGRATION OF EXPERIENCED OR NEW PLAYERS INTO AN EXISTING CAMPAIGN

A viable campaign is likely to suffer some attrition as it progresses, with players dropping out for one reason or another, and new participants coming into the campaign milieu. Some of these newcomers will be experienced players from other campaigns and have special characters which they wish to continue with. Other experienced players will have no characters, but they will have useful knowledge of the game which puts them apart from true novices. Finally, there will be the totally uninitiated participants — those who have only a vague idea of the game or who have absolutely no information as to what it is all about. These three types of new players will have to be integrated into a campaign

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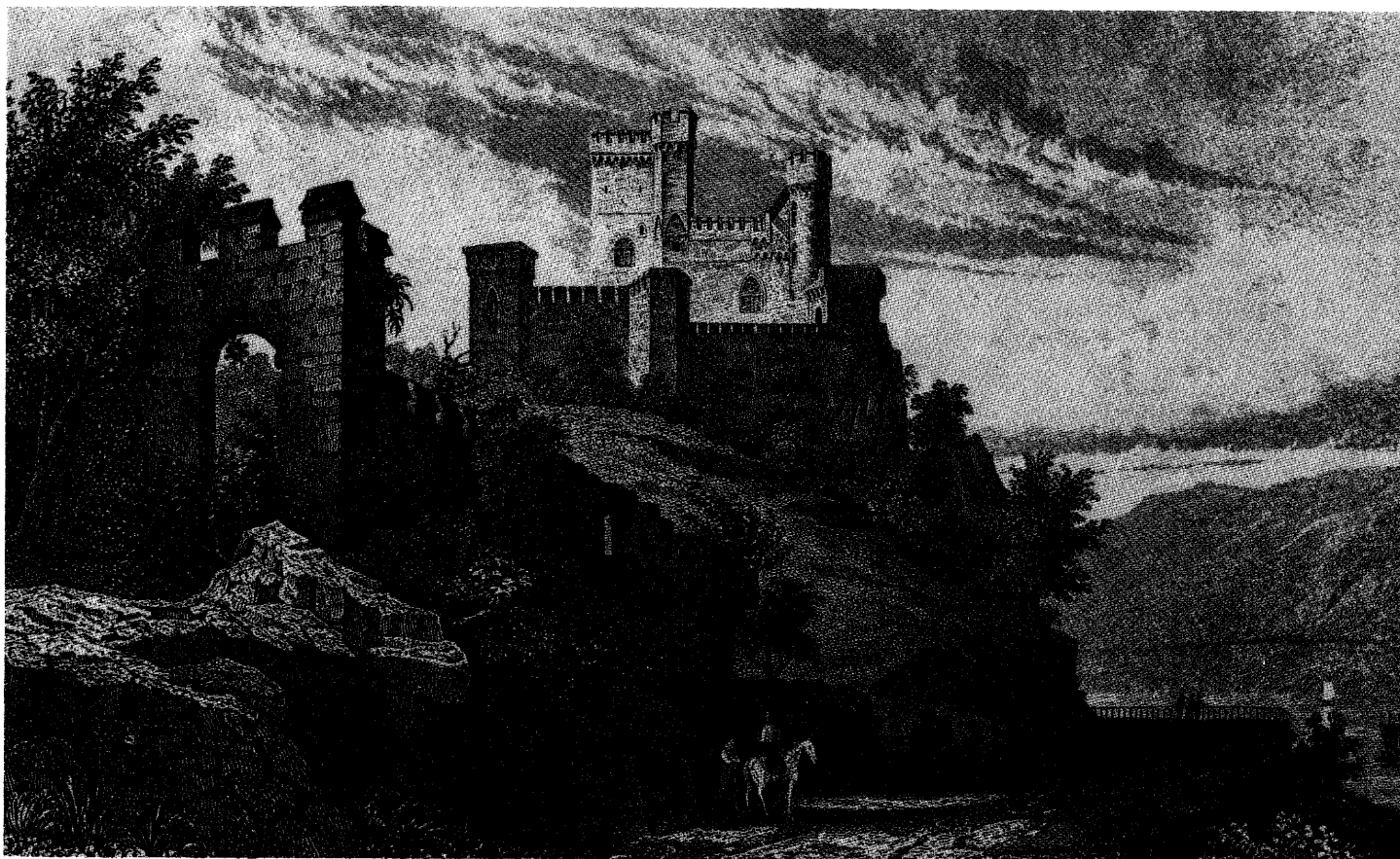
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Who lives in that castle?

Building it is one thing, running it is another

by Katharine Kerr

In any role-playing game set in a medieval-style world, no matter how vaguely developed, the castle has an important place. The very sight of a lonely keep, rising above the mists on a hilltop, is one that promises adventure. In game systems that provide for player-character strongholds, a castle is usually the first thing a player thinks of when his character obtains the means to build a stronghold. And if the campaign has important non-player characters of noble blood, the gamemaster has to create castles for them.

Although by using historical sources or gaming aids it's easy to design the actual castle buildings, stocking the castle with characters requires more thought. Living in and maintaining a castle requires many servants and officials, most of whom live in the castle with its lord. By describing the typical medieval castle household, this article offers guidelines for players and GM's alike who need to build a castle and set up its staff.

What is a castle?

A great many different buildings are loosely described as castles, ranging from ghastly stone houses built by nouveau riche film people to walled cities or military forts.

Properly defined, however, a castle is the personal fortification of either a king or a member of the nobility. The true castle serves two purposes: it is a dwelling for a noble family in times of peace, and a fort in times of war. Thus, neither garrisons for professional soldiers nor public fortifications such as walled towns can be counted as castles.

The true castle is always supported by the profits from a manorial estate (also called a manor or a seigneurie). At root, the manor is simply a holding of agricultural land, worked by dependent tenants who live upon it, and granted to a fighting man to feed him and his family while he serves his king or some other powerful noble. From that root, however, grew many vast estates where the lord ruled in his own name and thought about the king as little as possible. At the same time, many manors were little more than large farms.

The land of a typical manor is divided into three parts. The first, the lord's demesne, is technically the only property that he actually owns. Although the demesne is worked by his tenants, all produce from these fields belongs to the lord. The second division, the holdings of his tenants, belongs to them in a kind of invol-

untary lease — that is, they may not leave the land without the lord's permission, but neither may he expel them from their farms. The remaining land is common pasture and forest, theoretically shared by lord and tenants, but in practice controlled by the lord.

The size of the manor varies so widely that it's impossible to give exact figures for creating them, but in general, the more powerful the lord, the richer his holdings. The richness of the manor depends as much on soil fertility and climate as it does on size. Thousands of acres of moor and fen cannot support a baron as well as a modest holding of good river-valley land.

At the bottom of the scale is the small fief of a single knight. As a rough estimate, it takes the labor of fifteen to thirty peasant families, working a holding of forty to one hundred hectares, to support one knight, his family, and his warhorse. (A hectare is 10,000 square kilometers, or about 2½ acres.) On such a small manor, the knight lives little better than his peasants.

Rich manors, however, cover thousands of hectares and are worked by several thousand tenants. In medieval France, for example, the average manor of a lord of the baronial class was about three hundred

square miles. About one third of this estate was under the personal control of the baron or count, while the rest was parceled out to his knights in small fiefs of varying size. (This process of giving out pieces of a manor is called subenfeoffment.)

When setting up a manor to support the castle for either a PC or an NPC, the GM must remember that large tracts of good land are necessary to support a lord in any kind of style. Medieval-level agriculture is extremely labor-intensive and inefficient; thus the surplus, which goes to the lord, is going to be small.

Kinds of castles

Possessing the revenue from a large tract of land is also necessary to build the castle in the first place. Building a large stone fortification is expensive, even when much of the labor comes from unpaid peasantry. Let's look at the cost of some English castles in the 12th century. At that time, the English pound was divided into 240 silver pennies, and 30 of those pennies would buy a healthy ox or a warhorse. To build the small castle of Scarborough cost the king 656 pounds; to expand Wark on Tweed from a small castle to a medium-sized one cost 383 pounds; to build the elaborate castle at Orford cost 1,222 pounds — the equivalent of 9,776 warhorses!

Thus, not every petty knight living on a manor of 50 hectares is going to have a castle, even though possessing a proper castle is the ardent desire of every nobleman. Poor knights or PC's beginning to build a stronghold are more likely to have either a fortified manor house or a fortalice.

The fortified manor can take many forms, but its distinguishing characteristic is the use of wooden defenses instead of stone. The most common type is the motte-and-bailey. A wooden house sits at the top of the motte (a mound of earth heaped up, or a small natural hill). At the base of the motte, a palisade of heavy logs encloses the bailey (an open space useful for sheltering peasants in case of attack). Although the palisade is vulnerable to fire, a well-defended motte-and-bailey manor can withstand siege for several days, long enough for some ally or overlord to come to the rescue. Building and supporting a fortified manor house requires 40-60 hectares of land; a motte-and-bailey, about 100 hectares.

The fortalice is a step up for the wealthier noble. Such a fortification has a simple curtain wall of stone, enclosing a large ward, and perhaps has a fortified gatehouse. Inside the wall is a simple keep — usually a tall donjon tower, either round or square — that both houses the noble family and serves as a last-ditch defense if the wall is breached. A holding of around 150 hectares of land is necessary to build and support a fortalice.

The fortalice grades into the small castle proper. Although the small castle may have a separate dwelling house beside the donjon, most lords prefer to put the extra money into its defenses, adding ramparting

and a barbican tower. It will take at least 200 hectares of land to maintain a small castle.

The true castle, with its rings of walls, multiple towers, and stone dwelling-houses, requires a manor of at least 500 hectares and is thus usually the property of a lord of the baronial class. It may also belong to a king, who can support more castles than he can live in by taxes from the royal demesne as well as from the manor attached to each castle. Such royal castles have a military purpose, like guarding an important bridge, and will house a castellan and his family — a nobleman sworn personally to the king but holding his position by hereditary right.

The noble inhabitants

Castellans, however, are the rarest sort of castle inhabitants. Most will be lords from the baronial class, which includes any noble above the simple status of knight — barons, counts, dukes, margraves, and so on. During the actual Middle Ages, these various noble titles were considered equal in rank, rather than being graded into the strict hierarchy of later times. What truly determined a noble's status was the size of his manor and the strength of his holdings.

The lord and his immediate family live inside the donjon in a small castle, or in a palais (a separate dwelling-house) in a rich one. Besides his wife and children, the lord's family includes any younger brothers or sisters still dependent on him and probably his widowed mother, the dowager. Since noblemen lived short lives, on the whole, usually the eldest son inherited the manor before his siblings were grown. He was then responsible for raising them and either making good marriages for the sisters or finding land and a position for the brothers. (How well selfish lords fulfilled these duties is another question.)

Although the lord's primary duty in life is war, in peacetime few lords live idle lives. They are, after all, the administrators for vast estates with power over many lives, and the typical lord actively takes a hand in

running his land. On any given day, he is just as likely to be found discussing business with his bailiff and provosts as he is training with arms or hunting. Since the lord of the baronial class usually has the right of high justice over his tenants and dependents, he also spends much time acting as judge and jury for every legal dispute, crime, or petty squabble on his land, right down to arguments among peasants over a chicken or hog.

A word must be said about the typical noble lady of a castle. Although under medieval law a woman had few rights and was barred from most activities — she could neither own property nor bear arms, for instance — in practice such legal cavils were ignored. Usually the lady also takes an active part in running the estate; many important officials report directly to her, and she is responsible for all the daily accounts and doings of the servants. She is also her lord's hostess, which is a very important job in a world where a lord's reputation depends on his generosity.

Furthermore, the noble lady is also trained to hold her castle against siege while her husband is gone on campaign. During such crises, the men-at-arms and household knights obey her without question. Some ladies have even been known to take the field of battle, armed like men, to rescue their husbands from imprisonment. Thus, rather than the fragile flower depicted in modern romances, the feudal lady is a person with an air of command. If her husband is the commander of their domain, then she is his most trusted general, with true power over the household.

Retainers and officials

Any good-sized castle shelters a surprisingly large number of servants of varying degrees of rank. Since generosity is one of the marks of true nobility, supporting a large household brings status to the lord of the household. The lord will maintain as many people as he can feed, far more than necessary to do the actual work. A wealthy





'Any good-sized castle shelters a surprisingly large number of servants . . .'

baron, for example, might have three hundred people living behind his walls.

The most important member of this crowd are the retainers and officials of noble rank. In medieval society, there was absolutely no shame attached to performing the most menial services for a person of higher rank — to the contrary, it was an honor to be chosen for the task. Likewise, having retainers of noble blood increases the status of the castle's lord. It is the goal of powerful lords to have as many noble retainers as possible, even for such mundane jobs as falconmaster. Exactly how many castle officials will be noble-born depends, of course, on the castle-holder's wealth and reputation.

Even the poorest lord has at least one noble retainer, his squire. (Wealthy lords have three or four squires, for status.) The squire is a boy of noble blood who at age twelve or thirteen comes to live in another lord's family to receive his final training in arms and courtesy. Common opinion holds that no man can train his own son properly, because he would go easy on the boy, rather than being as harsh as a warrior's training demands. While living with his lord, the squire acts as both valet and companion. He helps his lord dress in the morning, waits on him at table, tends his personal horses, and runs whatever errands the lord needs to have run.

Just as the lord has his squires, the lady has her waiting women, girls of good family who are usually friends more than maids. The waiting women dress their lady, take care of her clothes, help with the children, and join her in the endless sewing of clothes that's such a large part of life for medieval women. Since a lord gains status by supporting many waiting women for his wife,

the usual lady has a retinue of many girls around her at all times. Most of these will eventually marry, but some waiting-women prefer to remain with their lady to avoid an unwelcome marriage. Such a woman will be the lady's chief confidante and thus a person of power within the castle.

Other noble-born retainers act as officials, coming between the lord and the actual servants. The exact number and positions of these officials will of course vary, depending on the wealth and size of the castle. A poor knight will only have one man to scurry around and do whatever he has time to do, while a rich baron will have the full staff listed below.

The chief officer in a large castle is the seneschal, who has many varied duties. He is the lord's right-hand man, the overseer of the fief as a whole, the lord's companion in battle, and his trusted political counselor. He disburses monies or food to the other officials, keeps an eye on their accounts, and solves whatever disputes are beneath the notice of the lord. In wartime, he is the second-in-command of the men-at-arms and vassals in the lord's army. If only one official in a household is noble-born, that one will be the seneschal.

The steward, overseeing the butler, cellarer, and cooks, is responsible for feeding the castle household — no easy job with three hundred people at table! He oversees the provision and storage of food from the actual farmland, sets the menus with the lady of the castle, gives orders to the cooks, and organizes any feasts or festivities. At mealtimes, he becomes a head waiter, coordinating the servants who are bringing in the food.

The chamberlain is responsible for the household work exclusive of food prepara-

tion. He supervises what little cleaning gets done, the hiring of common-born servants, the purchase and care of furniture and hangings, and the dispensing of any gifts the lord and lady care to make. He also has the important task of tending to the comfort of any guests. Both the steward and the chamberlain report directly to the lady.

The marshal, or equerry, is in charge of the stables, which are the core of the lord's military power in a cavalry-dominated world. The marshal supervises the stable boys and the groom, buys or trades horses as necessary, and assigns the horses owned by the lord to whomever needs to use them. Since most noble lords spend a lot of time discussing their beloved horses, the marshal usually has personal influence over the lord and thus great personal power.

Another person of great influence is the lord's chaplain, the priest who lives in the castle and performs religious services for all its inhabitants, noble or common. Beyond his religious duties, the priest knows the common law and is expected to advise the lord when he is dispensing justice. He also acts as the castle's almoner, dispensing charity to the poor who show up at the gates. In a fantasy world with pagan societies, this priest will not be a Christian father, of course, but most lords will keep a priest of their favorite god close at hand.

A wealthy lord also maintains as many men-at-arms as he can afford to keep in his barracks. Particularly if this force contains archers and pikemen, the men-at-arms are likely to be from the yeoman (free middle) class, but at their head will be at least one household knight of noble birth. In areas where there is constant warfare or danger from bandits and suchlike, the lord will maintain as many household knights as he

can afford, but in peaceful regions, he will enfeoff his knights on part of his manor.

The average household knight is a poor noble, usually a younger son with no chance at an inheritance, who spends his whole life in the lord's castle for what amounts to room and board — and the all-important chance to prove himself in battle. Some knights, however, are vagrant adventurers — noble-born, of course, but kicked out by their families for one shameful reason or another. These lesser knights own their own horses and equipment, rather than receiving them from the lord, and thus are paid a small fee in addition to their maintenance. In the castle hierarchy, these knights-errant, as they are called, come near the bottom as necessary evils, not to be trusted unless under the firm control of the seneschal.

In fantasy-world castles, great lords also have a personal wizard or sorcerer living with them. Such a magician is expected to use his skills in his lord's defense during war and to influence political events during peace. He also gives the lord counsel from his arcane lore and interprets omens that are beyond the range of the priest. Kings and particularly powerful nobles will have a personal alchemist in their castle as well.

Servitors and servants

Among the ranks of common-born servants in the castle there is a further distinction — between servitors, who have a certain amount of respect and position, and

the crowd of peasant servants who do the actual daily labor. The servitors have a craft to offer, such as blacksmithing, cookery, or hunting technique. These skilled laborers hold their positions by hereditary right, passing the job down to their sons or daughters as long as they have heirs. Servitors are generally proud of their position and very loyal to their lord if he's any kind of a decent man at all.

The servants, recruited from the peasantry on the manor, are treated like valuable farm animals. Kicks and curses are their daily lot from those above them in the hierarchy. They sleep wherever they can find a spot, usually on the floor or on a table in the lord's hall, or out in the stables. For wages, they receive food, one suit of clothes a year, and a few small coins at Christmas. Yet, odd though it seems to modern minds, being a servant in a castle is a sought-after job. Since status demands that the lord have more servants than are necessary for the work, no single servant works more than three or four hours a day — a much better lot than breaking one's back on the farm. Servants are also assured of getting enough to eat, which is not the case for other peasants.

A great castle will have close to a hundred servitors, counting their wives, and another hundred or so servants. Following are descriptions of some of the most important servitors, who will be found in any castle of decent size.

Working under the seneschal are those responsible for the security of the castle, the chief porter and the watchmen. Although the watchmen are recruited nightly from the men-at-arms, the chief porter has a hereditary job. Usually he and his family live in a gate-house, which is either just inside the gates or built into the wall over them. He is responsible for greeting — and scrutinizing — every person who comes to the gates and for deciding whether or not to admit them. If the visitor is noble, the porter must greet him with the ritual courtesy due his rank. If the visitor is judged undesirable, the porter must turn him out — by force if necessary. Thus, porters are trained in the use of weapons.

A lord who dispenses justice has an important servitor in the person of the sworn executioner. Although not the most popular man in the castle, the executioner is treated with respect. He's responsible for hanging or otherwise dispatching criminals, "persuading" suspected criminals to reveal evidence, and putting minor infractors in the stocks or flogging them. Oddly enough, the executioner also serves as a doctor for broken bones and wounds. Since he's trained to break bodies, he knows a good bit about repairing them as well.

Another person who serves as a doctor from time to time is the barber, sometimes known as a barber-surgeon. Although he shaves the noblemen of the household and cuts their hair like a modern barber, he also

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knows much primitive medicine and can dispense herbal potions for various ailments. His most common treatment, however, is bleeding the sick, either by opening a small vein or by applying river leeches to suck out the "bad blood."

Since the hunt is a very important part of castle life, providing not only amusement but much-needed meat, every castle has a staff of servitors devoted to hunting. The kennelman cares for and trains the lord's hounds; during the hunt, he supervises the pack. The falconer tends the falcons and hawks; he also has the unenviable job of raiding nests to steal young birds. The average falconer will have many scars on his face. The master huntsman tends and repairs the special hunting weapons, trains the beaters and netmen, and tracks game when the hunt is up.

Another crucial part of the castle's food supply is the garden, tended by the chief gardener and a crew of peasant servants. This garden supplies vegetables, pot herbs, and medicinal herbs as well as flowers. The flowers, however, are considered a "necessary luxury," because they are a bright spot of color in an otherwise drab life. Even the most battle-hardened lord will wear flowers in his hair for special events like weddings.

Even if a castle is near a town, the lord prefers to keep his own craftsmen within his walls. After all, one can't send to town for supplies during a siege! Every castle will have a carpenter, a tinker, a potter, and a stone-mason, but the most important of these servitors is the blacksmith. In fact, a large castle is likely to have two smiths, who, besides shoeing the small herd of horses within the castle, also produce nails, bolts, arrowheads, lance heads, shield bosses, and even chain mail. The smiths also repair broken weapons and horse-gear.

Working cloth is another important castle industry, because every piece of clothing or blanket used by those who live there is produced by the household. The castle's lady supervises a large staff of women who spin wool from the lord's sheep, weave it into cloth, dye it with herbal dyes, and then sew it into clothes to be dispensed as wages or gifts. The lady herself will sew her lord's clothing, perhaps adding a touch of fancy needlework if she has the time.

Head cook, baker, head groom, dairyman, poultryman — all are important servitors, and all will have lesser servants to help them at their work. The bailey and ward of a large castle are actually a village, filled with wooden shacks and workshops, housing the people who turn the produce from the land into the necessities and sometimes the luxuries of life.

Who pays for all of this?

Whether bushels of wheat or silver coins, disposable wealth has to come from somewhere, and the "somewhere" of the manorial economy is the labor of the tenant peasants, or serfs, as they are commonly known. Although many lords have subsidiary incomes from bridge tolls, river rights,



'Every castle has a staff servitors devoted to hunting.'

or town taxes, the bulk of their wealth comes from the land.

As mentioned above, about one-third of a manor is the lord's own land, the *demesne*. All produce from the *demesne* belongs directly to the lord. The tenants holding the rest of the manor also work on the lord's *demesne*, usually for three days a week. This service, called the *corvee*, is paid only by the head of each tenant family, but it is strictly enforced.

The other members of the family are then technically free to work their own land for their own profit, but in practice, the lord skims off a large share of their labor. For starters, each peasant has to pay an annual head tax, the *chevage*. If the lord has justice rights over the peasants (and most do), each family pays a further annual tax, the *taille*. Whenever the head of a family dies, his son must pay the lord a further tax to inherit the land.

Most onerous of all, however, are the *banalites*, duties and fees that must be paid constantly in order to live daily life. Peasants must grind their grain in the lord's mill, bake their bread in his ovens, use only his bull and stallion to stud their cows and mares, cross only his bridge at the stream — on and on, and all for a fee. These charges are enforced by physical violence, such as floggings or even maiming.

The French historian George Duby has estimated that the total charges upon a peasant amounted to 50% of his family's total output, and this is over and above the *corvee*. (And you think the IRS is bad?) The average peasant family, therefore, lives close to starvation. Their clothes are torn and filthy; their hut is tumbledown and drafty; their children die with heart-breaking regularity from malnutrition and small fevers. Most peasants also live in a state of sullen resentment that at times breaks out into open rebellion, but the lord's armed justice is swift to torture, maim, or kill any protestor. At its most basic level, the manorial

system resembles nothing so much as that well-known gangster ploy, the protection racket.

To keep the peasants in line and to extort all these fees, the lord requires a number of manorial officials, sometimes noble-born but more usually middle-class servitors, again holding their positions by hereditary right. At the top of the hierarchy is the bailiff, who might live in the castle, but who more likely lives in a farmhouse on the estate. The bailiff is the working overseer of the estate, making his daily rounds on horseback to collect work-gangs for the *corvee*, make decisions about plowing and planting, and supervise the collection of taxes and fees. Since they must make detailed annual reports to the lord and the seneschal, most bailiffs can read and write.

To help him, the bailiff has a varying number of assistants, the provosts. (Some lords dispense with a bailiff and have the provosts report directly to them.) The provosts directly supervise the *corvee*, and some do actual physical work as well, such as loading the taxes onto carts or tending the lord's horses when they are brought outside to graze.

Two other important estate officials are the forester and the game warden. The forester keeps track of all firewood cut from the lord's forest and of course imposes a fee upon the peasant for cutting it. The game warden's primary duty is to make sure that no one poaches any wild game from the estate. All deer, rabbits, and boars are the lord's property; any peasant who kills so much as a rabbit, even to protect his crops, will be summarily hanged.

The player character's castle

Now that the GM understands the requirements of a working castle, he is in a better position to supervise any players who wish to have their characters build strongholds, a process far more complex than the modern procedure of buying a piece of real

estate and hiring a contractor. At all stages, the GM should retain firm control of the process and put plenty of realistic obstacles in the character's way. In a sense, the GM will be role-playing the entire medieval environment and property system.

The first problem is acquiring enough land — not merely for the actual castle itself, but also for the manor to support it. Most players will protest that their characters don't need a manor, because they plan to support their castle with the coin from adventuring. Unfortunately, all the coin in the world can't buy food that isn't there to buy. Medieval agriculture is so inefficient that it's highly unlikely that the neighborhood peasants will have any food to sell after fulfilling their obligations to their lord.

Besides, their lord will probably outright forbid any sale of food to the adventurer in the neighborhood because any new castle is a rival for power. Even free farmers will sell only what food they can spare, leaving the character's castle vulnerable to bad harvests. Thus, the PC's castle requires a manor to feed it.

Buying land outright for coin is unheard of in a medieval-style world. At the most, a PC could obtain a small amount of land on a perpetual lease by paying a money rent, but it is far more likely that any manorial estate will come enfeoffed or entailed in one way or another. There are two kinds of land available for new manors: virgin territory, or farmland from a great lord's already existing manor.

Any virgin territory within a kingdom is considered the property of the king; squatters will have a war on their hands. Legally settling virgin territory requires a royal charter granting and establishing the new manor. In the case of manorial land, the lord who has rights to it must be persuaded to subenfeoff it to the PC. In both cases, the granter of the manor will wangle as many obligations as he can from the PC.

To obtain a manor from an overlord, whether king or baron, the PC has to acquire the lord's favor and convince him that he will be a loyal vassal in the future. Here's where all those coins and jewels can come in handy. Besides giving lavish presents to the overlord, the PC will have to bribe his important officials to get them on his side and perhaps even to get an audience with the overlord. Once the grant of land is offered, the PC has to swear homage to his new overlord, or suzerain, as it was often called.

In homage, the PC promises to become the overlord's vassal for the rest of his life (the PC's life, that is) and to perform certain services in return for the land. The minor ones can be widely varied, but the most common small obligations are to visit the overlord's court once a year, to entertain him sumptuously whenever he appears at the vassal's castle, and to help him with the expense of wedding or knightings of the lord's children when they come of age.

The major obligation, of course, is military service. The vassal must provide a

specified number of soldiers and their provisions for forty to sixty days a year. Whenever summoned, the vassal must personally fight at his lord's side. In some cases, it's possible to get out of this service by paying scutage, a money payment sufficient to hire and supply as many men as the vassal is failing to provide. The GM should decide whether the overlord in question will accept scutage. In a real emergency, the overlord will not.

If the PC has received a grant of manorial land that's already being farmed, he can proceed to building the castle. In the case of virgin territory, however, the PC will have to find farmers to work on the new manor. Peasants on an existing manor are usually willing to become colonists if they receive a better deal than they're already getting — an easy enough matter, considering their lot. It was common for colonizing lords to allow — reluctantly, of course — their colonists to lease the new land with rents due instead of full feudal service.

Since serfs are legally free men, not slaves, buying them out of serfdom is a ticklish business. While trying to keep up appearances, their former lord will try to get as much coin as possible per head. Lords will never risk underpopulating their own lands, of course, and thus will probably only allow 10-15% of their serfs to leave at any given time.

Once the farmlands are settled, the PC will also have to acquire servitors from the

middle classes and whatever noble officials or henchmen he can attract. To build the actual castle requires skilled, well-paid craftsmen brought out from towns. Most fantasy-game systems have prices in their rules for the actual cost of building. Craftsmen will demand to be paid in coin, not produce, but they will take part of the wages in living expenses while actually working.

The process of settling a manor and building a castle should take game-years, not months. The PC isn't slapping up a modern condominium of lath and sheet-rock, but building in stone for the ages. The GM will probably have to rule that the PC doesn't have the resources to build his dream castle all at once but must either adventure again or wait until the land begins producing enough revenue to finish the work.

Most PC's, in fact, will have to start a stronghold as a fortified manor or fortalice. Although players will gripe about this, the GM should hold firm. After all, a recurring problem in long-running campaigns is the rich and incredibly powerful PC who unbalances the game by his very presence. First building, then maintaining a castle is an excellent way to drain off not only wealthy but playing time from such a PC.

First of all, the PC will have to spend playing time fulfilling his obligations to his overlord. The military service will always come due in summer — prime adventuring

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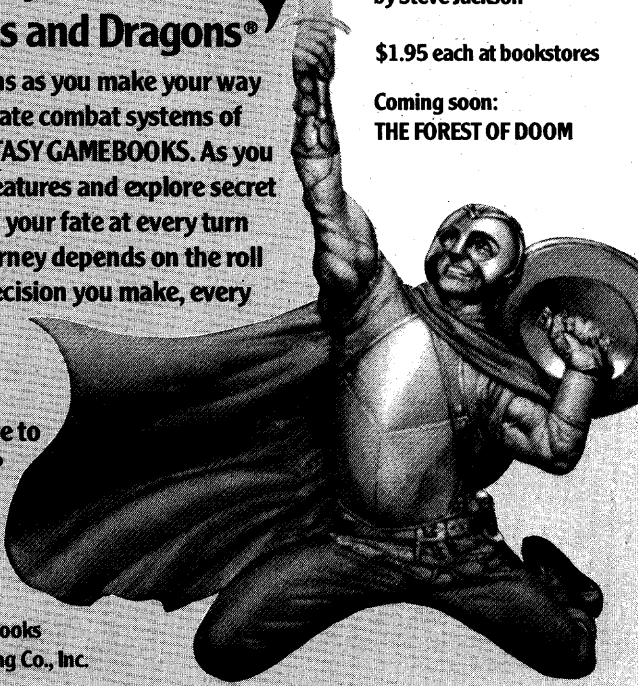
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weather. An overlord's visit will cost a great deal of money for the lavish feasts and entertainments that are necessary to keep the overlord's good favor.

Second, running a large manor takes time. If the PC is away from home too often, the officials are likely to turn dishonest and begin stealing revenues, or turn so ruthless that they cause a peasant revolt. The PC must also maintain a court of justice and be at home to receive taxes and homage from those below him.

Finally, a powerful PC on a rich manor is going to cause envy, and thus enmity, among his neighbors. Petty feuds and envious disputes are common in a medieval-style society, and they're always settled by the sword. Fighting a local war is a much better use of a powerful PC's talents than is stripping hapless dragons of their wealth.

The castle in the campaign

Since building and maintaining a castle is such a difficult proposition, castles aren't going to exist in every hex of the campaign map. The common pattern, in fact, will be one powerful castle for every, two or three hundred square miles, surrounded at intervals by the fortalices of the rich lord's vassals. Royal castles will be even rarer. In a kingdom with a weak central government, there may be no royal castles at all except for the king's personal dwelling.

Because of the large number of servants, servitors, and retainers who live in a castle, drawing up a castle minutely for an NPC is as much work as creating a small town. Fortunately, unless the NPC has a crucial central role in the campaign, or the GM wishes to run a series of scenarios in a particular castle, there is no need to create every single inhabitant and give them full stats. After all, unless the player party is a bunch of murderous brigands, they are unlikely to engage in combat with the blacksmith's wife or the pig-boys.

As a starting point, the GM should write a descriptive paragraph for each truly important inhabitant in the castle, such as the lord and his family, the noble officials, the chief household knight, and such servitors as the player party is likely to meet, such as the chief porter. Here's an example

of such a sketch: "Sir Gervase, the senechal, is a strong middle-aged man with great skill with weapons. He uses his quick wits and considerable worldly wisdom loyally in the service of his lord." Then, if stats are necessary at some later time, the GM can either roll them up or simply decide them within the parameters of the sketch.

Lesser servitors and servants can be merely listed and noted, for instance: "twelve serving wenches, two very pretty," or "Hubert the blacksmith; lives in the bailey; strong arm with war hammer."

When it comes to running the castle, impressionistic story-telling will fill a lot of gaps. For example, let's suppose a player party is entering a castle for the first time. After an actual encounter with the chief porter, they go through the gates. The GM can say something like this: "Out in the bailey, you see a large number of wooden sheds and huts. Servants hurry around carrying food and firewood; a couple of grooms are currying horses by the main well; you hear the clang of a blacksmith's hammer over the general din." Such a scene-setting gives the feel of castle life without stats and continual dice rolls.

When mapping out the manor for an important castle, likewise, the GM should indicate where the peasant villages are and how many families live in them, but it's unnecessary to make a detailed placement of every hut and field. The map can indicate the lord's forest, major streams, and other such natural features on a simple hex-by-hex basis. If the player party is the sort that's likely to get into trouble, by poaching on the lord's forest preserve or robbing someone, then the GM can set up the daily route of the bailiff, provosts, and gamekeeper and give them some combat stats.

The time spent working up a realistically populated castle will pay off in the fun of running it. All these assorted NPC's provide opportunities for encounters and character interaction beyond the usual combats — love affairs, resentments, friendships, diplomatic squabbles — all in a fantasy setting that will still seem "real" to the players. A truly well-realized setting adds enormously to everyone's enjoyment — and that's what fantasy role-playing is all about!

A note on further reading

GM's and players who are interested in more detail about castle life can find many books available these days, some in paperback. One of the best is *Life on a Medieval Barony* by William Stearns Davis (Harper and Row, 2nd ed. 1953). Serious role-players, especially *Chivalry and Sorcery* fans, will find that reading this or some similar book adds enormously to their fun. Hard-working GM's who want more information about the manorial system and the sizes and population of average holdings should gird their loins and attack *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, Volume I: *The Agrarian Life of the Middle Ages*, edited by M. M. Postan (Cambridge University Press, 1966).

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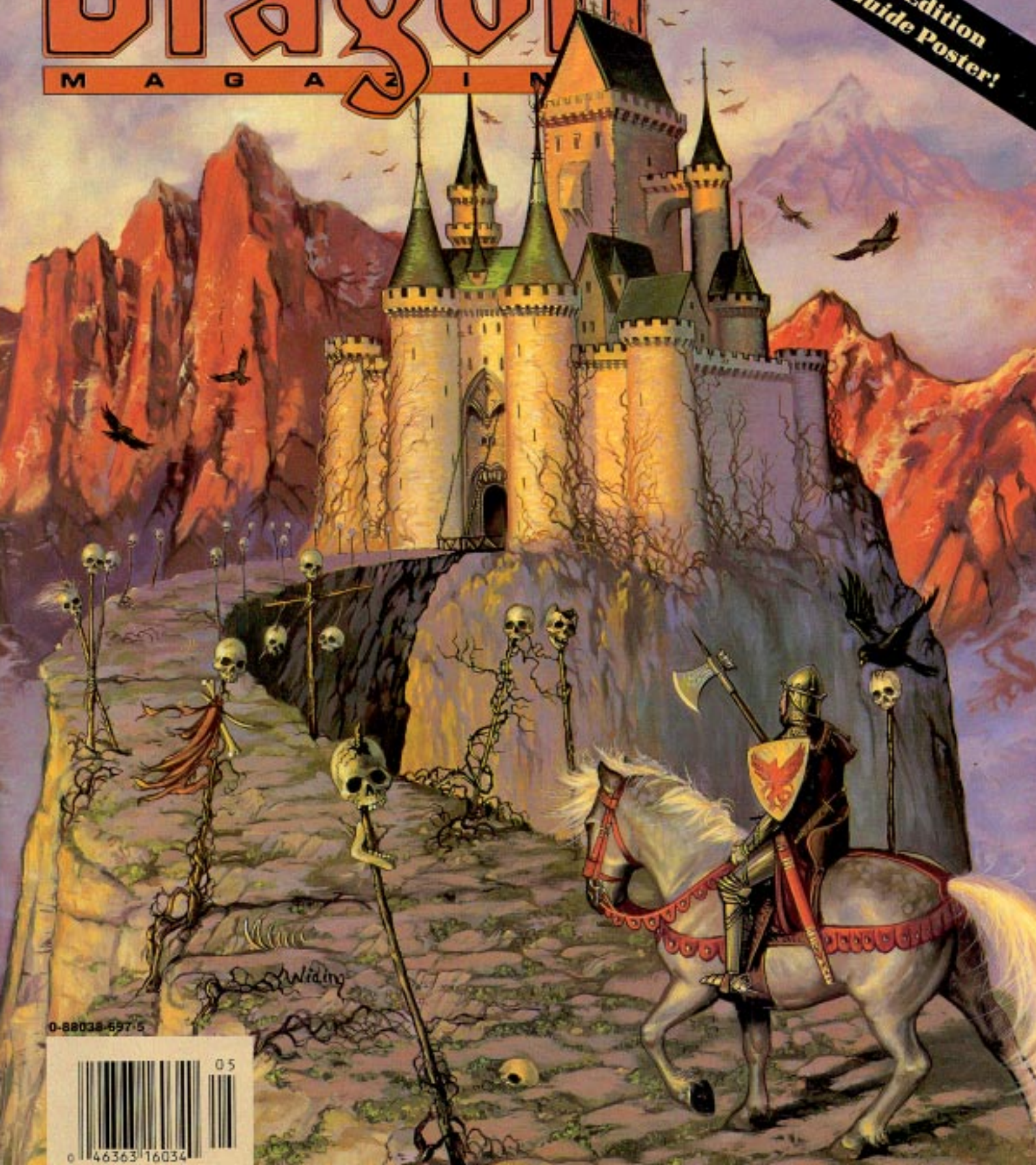
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Your Home Is Your Castle

And there's more to
castle-owning than meets the eye

by Patricia Cunningham-Reid

The adventurers huddled at the bottom of the castle wall. After making it this far without being seen, they were reluctant to turn back. But how would they get in? Byrnel the thief looked up the wall as the druid Ralt Gaither silently reviewed his list of spells. The magic-user Sharla considered once again the wisdom of taking the castle by force. That's what the warrior Niwatch wanted to do, she knew, and she had some spells that would help. But did they have what it would take? The castle would have between 20 and 100 people inside. Could her magic missile hit someone at the top of the castle wall? Could a stone shape spell cut a hole in the base of a castle's wall? The prospects weren't promising.

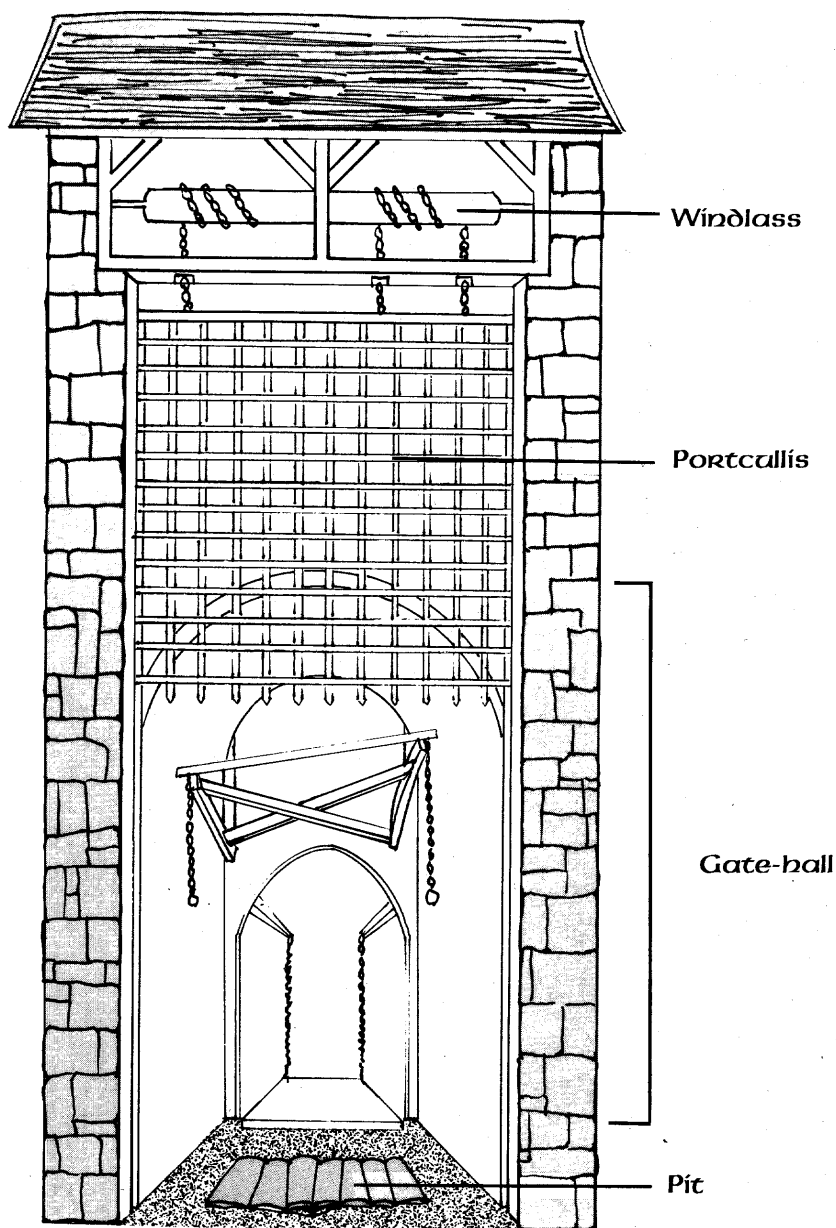
The architecture of and lifestyle surrounding European-style castles can be of vital importance to player characters, primarily because the castles PCs encounter in fantasy games are likely to be built with some of the same features. Druids might be interested to know that the *stone shape* spell will not put a hole completely

through a castle wall. Rangers should understand the slim chance of hitting someone at the top of a wall with an arrow. Scouting PCs would be interested to know what a moat might contain before they swim across it. Castles can be held by a handful of men against an army; fighters need to understand how this is done

before they storm the walls,

The following material is largely drawn from historical sources on castles. The use of magic in gaming, even on a small scale, might produce drastic differences in the ways castles are built, maintained, and attacked.

A fortified entry, from the inside



What is a castle?

A castle is not merely a building surrounded by stone walls. A castle is built both for defense and as a residence for its lord and his family. It is this dual purpose that sets the castle apart from a fort or manor.

To provide for the castle residents, however, the castle is also an estate and has land that is farmed by the local peasants. It serves as the local government and is a social center for the countryside, as well as the barracks and residence for local knights, hired guards, and their families. The castle is the home of the local blacksmith, armorer, carpenter, and miller. The only prison for the area is here. All forms of recreation, from tournaments to fairs, are located either within the castle walls or just outside them. All education is

located in the castle, including reading and writing, training to become a knight, and apprenticeships to various trades. Not all villages have a church, but the castle might have one or two chapels and the only priests outside of monasteries and cities. The castle is, in short, the center of all local activity.

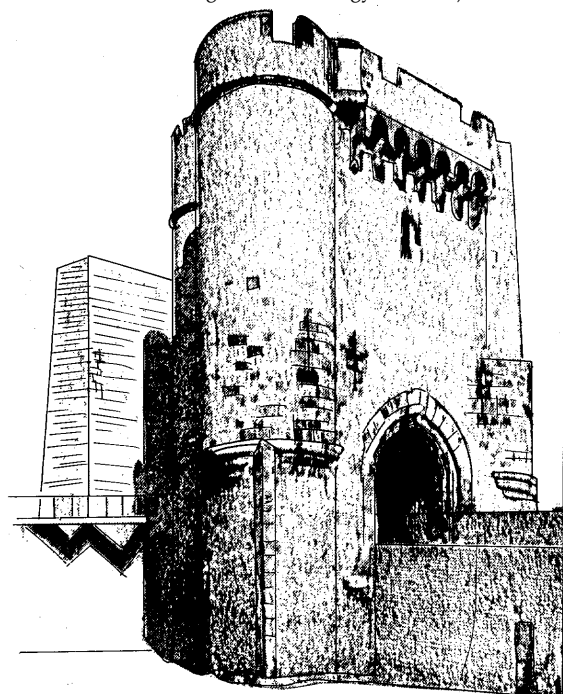
Often, castles are pictured hanging onto a cliff edge, offering a romantic look at the sea and countryside. The location of the castle is not, however, chosen to provide a pretty view. Castle sites are selected with care. They are placed to guard or protect an important seacoast, mountain pass, road, river, or city. Particularly fertile farmland might also warrant a castle. The more important the site, the bigger and better defended the castle.

Castle residents

A king might own many castles. He and his retinue might regularly travel from one castle to another to check on the management of the countryside, overhear major problems in the area, and prove his sovereignty. With the king in residence, castle life bustles — entertainment, housing, and fine meals are required for dozens of extra people. This often requires the temporary services of most of the neighbors. When the king moves on, the castle employees are left to clean the rooms and moats, replenish all supplies, and pay the temporary help. The castle is ruled by a constable (called a castellan in the AD&D® game) until the king's next visit.

Although the king does not personally own all castles in his domain, his permission is required to build one therein. When conferring a title and land on one of his sons or loyal retainers, the king grants permission for him to build a castle. At such a castle, the lord is sometimes absent for long periods of time due to war or service to his king. However, the lord's family is permanently in residence.

In addition to the lords immediate family, most castles (using history as a guideline) are inhabited permanently by a constable and about 30 men-at-arms, with a chaplain, an artiller, a smith, a carpenter, and a mason, with janitors, watchmen, and other housekeepers. The lady of the castle has several maidens or waiting women, and her children are cared for by a nursemaid. During a siege, the average castle can be defended by up to 100 knights and 100 men-at-arms. Although most of these men are not permanent residents, room is available for them in case of emergency. (For more information on castle residents, see "The Care of Castles" by Katherine Kerr, in the Best of DRAGON® Magazine Anthology, Vol. IV)



Building castles

A castle is built primarily using local labor and materials; sometimes the labor and materials are actually paid for. The castle is funded through taxes placed upon the local inhabitants who, the lord often claims, are safer due to the castle's presence. (Which inspires the question: Why would someone attack the peasants if the castle isn't there?)

Building a castle is expensive. It cost £7,000 to build parts of the hold and outer wall of Dover Castle, at £1,000 a year. The king who built this castle paid for it from his income, which was about £10,000 a year. To give a better perspective of how costly this was, consider that a knight in medieval times could live comfortably on £10-20 a year.

Building and maintaining his castles can be a king's largest single and continual expense. The AD&D 1st Edition *Dungeon Masters Guide* (pages 106-108) and the D&D® *Master Players' Book* (page 28) have information on the costs of building a castle, but a DM allowing a character to build one should evaluate these expenses carefully against the type and size of castle desired.

Originally, castles and forts were built of wood. In warfare, these structures didn't last nearly as well as their stone counterparts, but in many places stone was scarce and wood was readily available. Also, stone had to be cut without the use of the tools we have today. Hand-cutting rock is neither easy nor quick. As a result, castle construction should take place from spring to fall, and one stone building may take around five years to complete. Because of this, most castles are a combination of wood and stone. The buildings that are not directly related to defense are usually of wooden construction (such as the chapels, smithies, and kitchens). Stone buildings are built from sandstone, flint, granite, and sometimes limestone.

The inner and outer castle walls circle the castle and are usually three layers thick, designed much like a sandwich. A fill of gravel, dirt, and pebbles separates the layers of large stone blocks. A good stonemason would be able to fit the stones together leaving very few cracks.

Most castles start as small motte-and-bailey castles, as detailed in the following section. However, throughout history, the needs and purposes of castles changed; as the need for a stronger, larger, or more comfortable residence grew, so grew the castle. If built on the location of an old fort or castle, the original building was sometimes used as the base for the castle keep. Additions would be built around the outside of the castle, and the keep would be used as a residence while the newer sections were completed around it.

Castle construction

Basic castle construction starts with the motte-and-bailey castle. The motte is a hill or mound, either man-made or natural, upon which the main building or keep is built. The surrounding walled courtyard, called a bailey, provides protection for the keep. If the motte is man-made, the keep is usually wooden, as the motte is not strong enough to support a stone tower. For this reason, early castle designers frequently built castles on flat land with an above-ground basement, which was then surrounded with dirt for a man-made motte.



A man-made motte has several advantages. First, it can be built anywhere. An important site can have a motte-and-bailey castle built right next to it, as the lord does not have to look for a natural motte. Also, the motte can be created in any shape or size, depending upon the surrounding ground. When digging the ground for the motte, a careful designer may also create a moat. A man-made motte is usually 50-120 high and 50-300' across, with steep sides. If a natural hill is used, the castle is designed around its size and shape.

The growth of a castle is not always anticipated with accuracy, and the site for each castle is not always determined by the flatness or size of the ground on which the castle stands. Thus, each fort grows as the land around it allows, and very few castles have common layouts. Each castle is unique, fitting into the needs and whims of its lord and land. Despite this, castles do have some common structures, such as outer walls, an inner building, and fortified entrances. As architecture was studied more by the castle designers, more advanced designs were introduced — not to make the castles look better, but rather to make them more defensible or livable.

Although the castle is mainly a fortress, it must be flexible and be able to sustain life within it year-round. Most buildings

and rooms are designed for as many uses as possible. Rooms are located in the great hold, around the inside of the palisades, as part of the gatehouse building, or as small separate buildings.

Although it is easy to romanticize about castle life, in reality it was and is quite grim. Castles are often cold, dark, dank, and drafty, and give little or no privacy to the tenants. Comfort in a castle means having a room with a fireplace, covered windows, and maybe some tapestries on the walls to block drafts and offer insulation. Chairs and sofas are frequently

ornate but not comfortable to sit in. Lights are kept lit in the main rooms but not in others, and seldom in corridors. Even in daylight, a scroll or spell book will be difficult to read unless the reader is standing next to an arrow slit of an upper-level window. (The advantage to this, of course, is that thieves have little trouble hiding in shadows even in the main rooms and halls.) Magical light would be of exceptional help. Straw is used instead of carpets and is replaced only once or twice a year. In the Middle Ages, clothes were rarely washed and were worn until they rotted, and people neither bathed nor washed for fear of

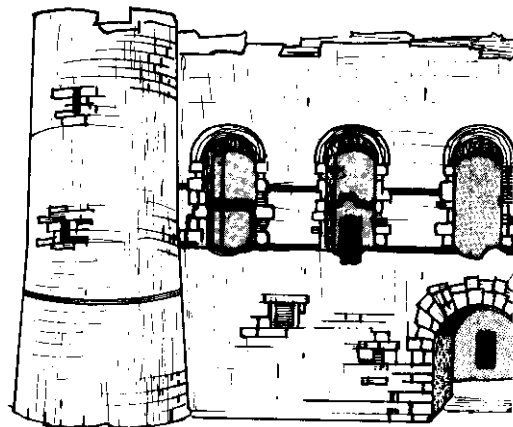
catching their death of cold or disease.

Marriages, as with all jobs, were arranged and planned by the lord or king to benefit the castle or country as a whole. Superstition ruled the peasants, as well as many knights and nobles. Individual desires of a castle's people were of little concern.

The hold

The hold, originally called the donjon or keep, is the innermost section of the castle. It is a miniature fortress in itself. In fact, when a castle is built around a fort,

Gatehouse



the fort often becomes the hold. In castles without a separate hold, the gatehouse is frequently built with several stories to provide rooms traditionally found in the hold.

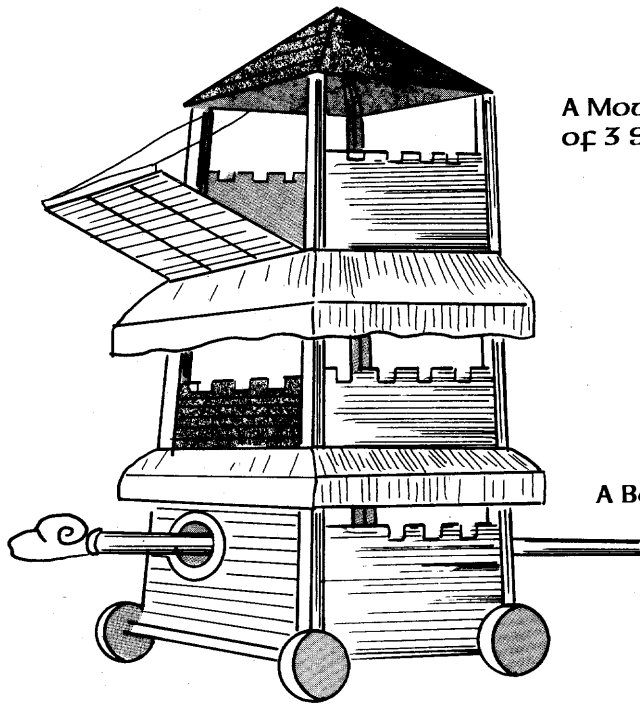
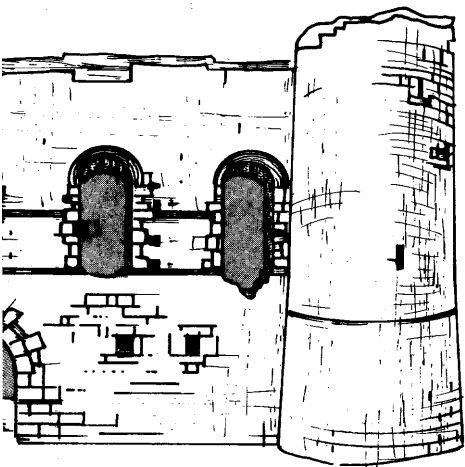
The hold is used during peaceful times for the residence of the lord and lady, as well as most of the castle staff. During war times, the hold is a last resort for the defenders. Consequently, the hold has to be independent from the rest of the castle in case of siege. A well and provisions must be available. Foodstuffs — including salt for preserving meat, livestock (or preserved meat), ale, cheese, beans, oats (for the horses), charcoal, and firewood (for cooking and defense) — are stockpiled and monitored by the lady of the castle. (Picture the keep during siege — the first floor filled with lowing cattle, bleating sheep, and clucking chickens. The noise might not be too bad at first, but imagine the smell after a couple of weeks with no fresh straw!)

As time goes on, the demand for comfort grows. Consequently, additions to the castle might include more comfortable residences, and the royal family might move to a separate building within the castle walls. Frequently, the old residence in the donjon becomes a prison for higher-class prisoners.

Some of the later historical castles were designed to include a prison. These prisons were moved underground (hence, the evolution of the name from “donjon” into “dungeon”). However, the higher-ranking prisoners were still kept in an apartment rather than a dank, smelly prison. This was especially true of women captured as hostages.

The hold is a series of rooms and floors, usually with a great hall and a kitchen on the second floor. Kitchens are used during the day for cooking and at night for the bedding of the kitchen workers or the female castle staff.

Many holds have a front building that controls access. The front building contains a guardhouse on the first floor and stairs or a ladder going up to a second



A Moveable Tower of 3 Stages

A Battering Ram

guardhouse, which leads into the great hall. The first floor has no exterior doors. (This makes going out for a stroll a real excursion.)

The great hall is used during the day by the majority of the residents for all meals; it is also used as a meeting place for the lords court (often for dispensing justice to the general populace). At night, this room beds most of the male castle staff. During celebrations, the straw on the floor is changed, the tables are scrubbed, and banners are hung around the walls. Unfortunately for most inhabitants, celebrations are infrequent.

The great room has a well and a privy chamber (the toilet). The privy chamber consists of a long-passage going almost through the entire outer wall. A hole in the floor lets waste drop down outside into a moat or ditch.

Apartments or sleeping chambers fill most of the second floor and are reserved for the lord, the lady and her maids, their young children, their nursemaids or servants, special guests, knights, and house officials. Each apartment consists of one or two connected rooms. The lord and the lady usually have separate apartments. The castle lady and lord each sleep with a servant at the foot of the bed.

The women's dorm is also located in the hold. This dorm contains one or two rooms reserved for the lady's maidens or waiting women, and it is used during the day by the lady and her gentlewomen for sewing, weaving, spinning, and socializing. At night, this becomes their common sleeping area.

Most castles also have a solar, a private room that resembles a study, reserved for the castle lord. This is located in the great hold on either the first or second floor.

The solar is sometimes a part of the lords apartments but is frequently separate. Because the solar is the lords retreat, it is often more comfortable than the rest of the castle.

In addition, towers are usually located at each corner of the hold. These contain circular staircases, privy chambers, and small guardrooms. The towers might also be topped with turrets.

Walls and baileys

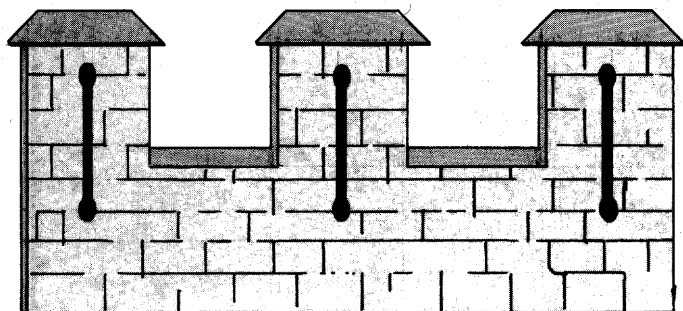
Sometimes, the hold is built against the outside wall (the palisade or curtain), but often the hold has an inner bailey (sometimes more than one) and outer bailey. The bailey, also called the ward, is the land surrounded by a ring of walls.

During peaceful times, the inner baileys are used for flower, herb, and vegetable gardens. Frequently, the outer bailey is very narrow, consisting primarily of a ditch. When a larger bailey is available, it is used for sword practice, as a marketplace, for smithy work on hot days, or for various other activities.

A series of buildings are often built into or against the walls of the inner bailey. These buildings might include a smithy, a mill, the stables, one or more chapels, a larder, schools for the pages, barracks for the men-at-arms (for a lord constantly worried about sieges), storage rooms, a cobbler's shop, a brewery, a hospital, a bakery, a tailor's shop, and so forth.

These inner walls are usually taller than the outer palisades, but they are just as strong and with all the outer-wall defenses. The inner wall has one primary gate between the inner and outer baileys. This is sometimes a simple door, but it is more frequently a series of gates.

The base of the wall is often over 20'



Crenelles and Oilets

thick and narrow toward the top. Most walls, however, are between 10-12' thick. The walls are up to 40' high. Inside the castle, all walls are propped up with wooden supports.

Castles and warfare

Castles might be attacked by a king's army when a lord becomes disloyal, or by an invading army whenever the army gets restless or the invading leader becomes greedy. An attack on a castle is an attack on its constable and lord. No one gets to be either a lord or constable without frequently proving himself to be a strong and resourceful leader, so any group attempting to overcome a castle should assume that the residents are smart, strong, and eager to win. Most castle residents realize that losing the castle means losing their home, family, and money, if not their lives.

Many medieval castles started as simple affairs with minor defenses, but as the art of war developed, the art of castle defenses also developed. Most of a castle's defenses are built into the castle, rather than provided by knights and men-at-arms. Because such defenses can be rather awesome, small groups of attackers rarely attempt to lay siege to a castle, instead preferring to infiltrate during a fair or on market day, or else stage a commando-style raid under darkness.

Laying siege to a castle is the primary tactic used by armies to overcome it. Cut off from all supplies, an ill-prepared castle will not last long. However, a siege is a strain for everyone involved, defender and attacker alike.

The knights in a castle under siege are usually either hired by the castle's lord or work a specified number of days per year in payment for their fiefs. Knights can get very expensive, though. Worse yet, the peasants in the surrounding countryside usually expect the castle's lord to take them in and offer them shelter in wartime. This gives the lord a great many mouths to feed and very little space or privacy in which to work. Therefore, the lord is interested in keeping a siege short. (A heavily armed castle means either the

owner is expecting a siege, is preparing for battle, or is very rich.)

Things are little better on the other side of the wall. An attacking army needs to be two or three times as large as the defender's forces because the attackers have no walls or buildings to protect themselves. These men are hired by the attacking lord and have to be paid well to keep them from deserting. At planting and harvesting times, and in bad weather, the attacking lord might find his army dissolving around him.

For these reasons, both the defenders and the attackers want to keep the sieges as short as possible. To ensure this, the attacker starts by requesting that the castle lord surrender — this request is sometimes sent in a letter to the castle before the attacking army has even gathered. The lord usually refuses, as battles are loved by most lords (and surrendering would leave him and his family both homeless and penniless).

Once the surrender is refused, the attacking army is assembled, approaches

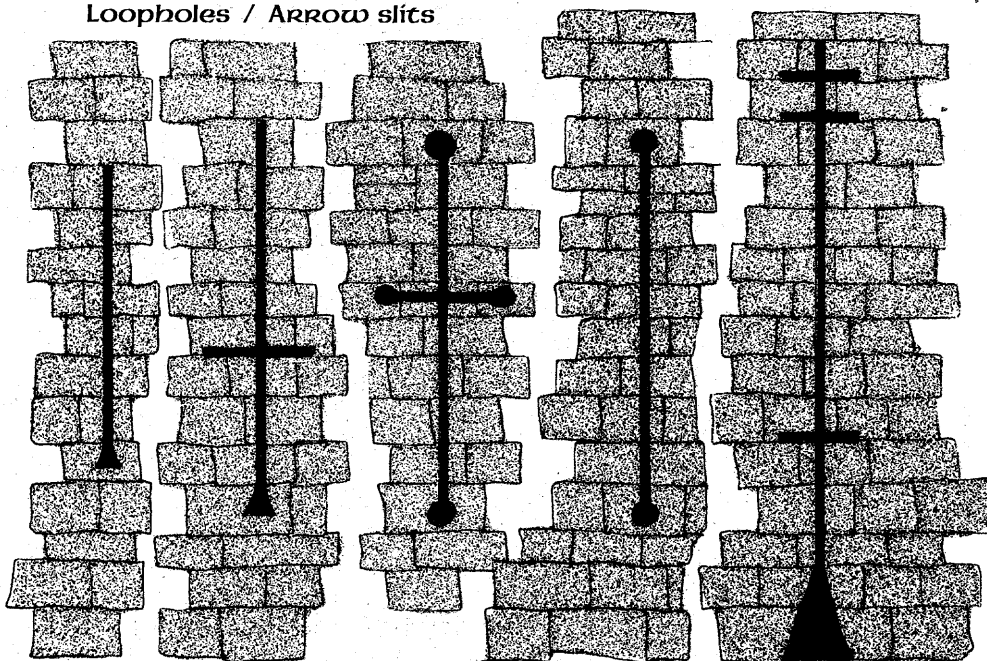
the castle, and destroys all crops, cattle, and cottages along the way. This is meant as an insult to the lord who is responsible for the well-being of his people and land. Once at the castle, the army surrounds it, attempting to cut off all escapes and supplies. The army leader then parleys with the castle lord. They usually discuss their reluctance to give up, whether either side expects reinforcements in a short time, and the season and weather (for the sake of war, not for the sake of conversation). If reinforcements are expected, the two might agree to siege for a specified number of days or weeks. If the reinforcements show up by then, the siege ends under the assumption that the side receiving the help would win. If no reinforcements are expected, or if the two sides cannot agree on a deal, the attack begins in earnest.

The lord's castle, however, is designed to shelter and protect his own family and retainers, not the entire countryside. His wife or the castle constable is responsible for insuring that enough livestock and grain is available for sieges. However, if the defending lord sees that his resources of food are getting low, he sometimes sends the peasants out of the castle. If the attacking leader lets them through his army lines, they wander the country looking for shelter until the siege ends — their own homes having been destroyed by the army. If the army leader does not let the peasants through, they are caught between the two forces, completely defenseless.

Offenses

Bows and crossbows: A castle can be cheaply and easily attacked with the use of arrows. These can be shot from a distance, and the bowmen do not need extensive training or skills — that is, they are cheap to hire in comparison to knights.

Loopholes / Arrow slits



Bores and picks: Castle walls are usually built out of stone. A pick or bore can be wedged between the stones to pull them from the outer layer of wall. Once the middle layer of rubble is cleared away, the bores and picks can work on the inner layer of wall, creating a hole big enough for the knights and bowmen to gain access to the castle interior.

Battering rams: A large tree trunk can be swung at a wall or gate, causing the obstacle's gradual weakening and the eventual appearance of a hole in the defenses. The ram can be held by men or else hung from a frame by ropes or chains, to be swung with greater ease.

Tunnels: A tunnel is often dug under the moats, ditches, and castle walls. Tunneling is one of the most feared offensive tactics, as this often causes the entire wall over a tunnel to crack and fall. Also, once the tunnel is well started, the defending army can rarely stop the tunneling.

Machines: Stone-throwing machines are commonly used against castles. They can also be built on top of towers for added advantage. These machines throw stones at the wall to weaken it or into the castle to demoralize the defenders. Some machines might be used to throw primitive types of chemical explosives.

Fire: Older castle buildings are frequently made of wood. This makes fire a perfect offensive weapon. Fires can be started by using burning arrows or large throwing machines that hurl burning masses of pitch.

Towers: Frequently, the enemy force builds towers of wood (called belfries) to use against the castle. Used at a distance, belfries can hold a large complement of archers to shower the castle interior with arrows. Belfries can also be used to spy on the castle inhabitants, or machines can be mounted onto the towers to throw stones at the castle walls, at the castle's stone-throwing machines, or into the castle itself. The belfries are more useful at close range, however, as men can quickly climb from a belfry over the castle walls. These towers can simultaneously protect miners, borers, men with picks, and other wall-workers. Building towers requires lots of skill, tools, and materials.

Work shields: Similar to the towers, great wooden shields can provide attackers with cover while they attempt to overcome the castle. Miners and such usually have them.

Defenses

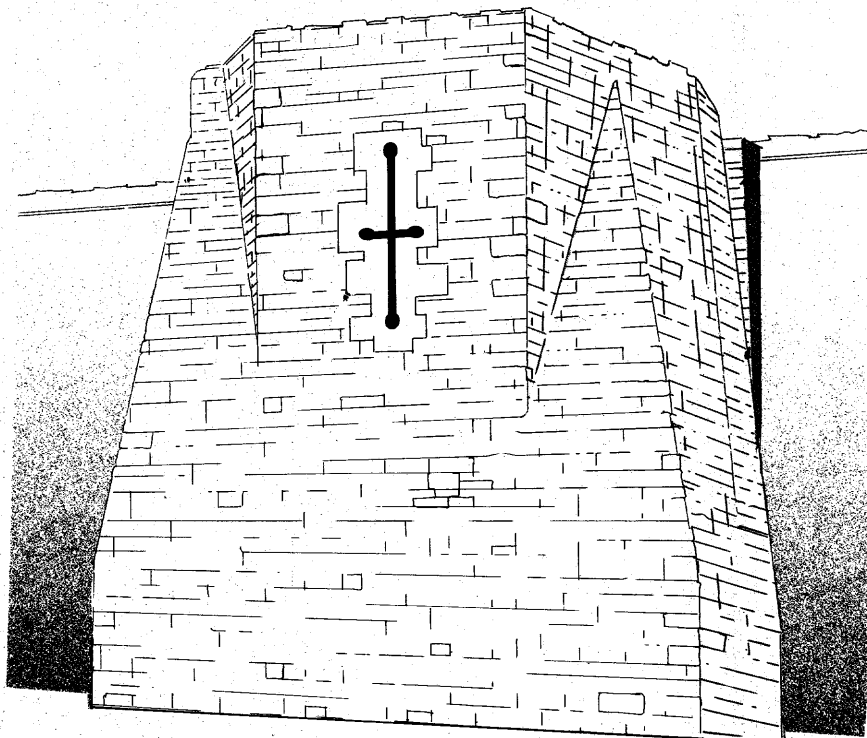
Cleared land: The first defense for any castle is early warning of the approaching army. Clearing the land for approximately 10 miles around the castle makes it easier for castle inhabitants to spot oncoming forces. Ten miles is a general figure based on the distance a man can ride in a day and still get back before dark.

Ditches and moats: A castle commonly has a series of ditches and moats surrounding the castle walls. Before the

attackers can scale the walls with ladders or bore holes through the walls, they have to get over the ditch by either filling it in, carrying their weapons over it, or by building small bridges across it. Ditches (and especially moats) make tunneling more difficult, as the tunnels have to be deeper and longer, and the chance of collapse is greater. To hinder crossing

thrown by the attacker's war machines, often splintering and bouncing into the attacking army. (And remember the *stone shape spell*?)

Baileys: The narrow size of many outer baileys narrows the number of large weapons that can be used against the inner walls. These baileys each usually consist of a ditch and a narrow pathway



An arrow slit in an outer wall tower of a castle

parties, the ditches are often filled with thorns and rocks. Moats are frequently filled with stagnant water and also serve as the dump for the privies. (PCs may wish to think about that before they decide to swim across!) Other moats may be filled with swiftly flowing water from a nearby river, thus making swimming across them difficult.

Motte: As a defense, the motte offers the defenders a greater firing range. In addition, the enemy is forced to struggle uphill, giving the castle residents a better view of the enemy army. Furthermore, any towers used against the castle are built to accommodate the hill's slope. What the motte is made of, however, is also important. If the hill is man-made, tunneling is much easier for the attackers.

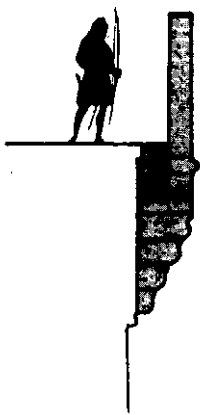
Outer walls: The outer walls are the first form of defense that allow the castle inhabitants to attack back. While attackers are held back, defenders can shoot arrows, drop stones, fire war machines, or use other attacks against them. Such walls are often very thick at the bottom and narrow toward the top. This extra thickness at the bottom, called a plinth, makes it more difficult for bores, picks, and battering rams to penetrate the wall. The plinth also serves to ricochet stones that are either dropped through holes above or

that leads to the gatehouse, forcing any attackers into single file and limiting the number of attackers able to reach the gatehouse simultaneously.

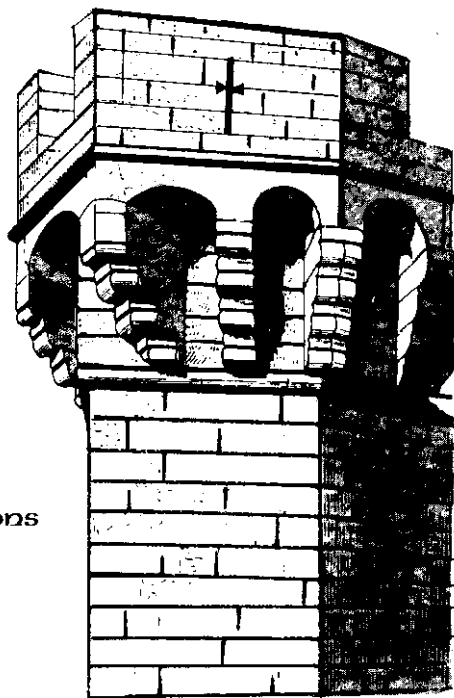
Inner wall: If an enemy manages to breach the outer wall and is not driven back, the castle tenants retreat behind this secondary wall. The attackers are then caught in the outer bailey like sitting ducks until they are either killed by the defenders or are able to overcome the inner wall.

Battlements: Both the inner and outer walls, as well as the towers and keep, have walkways (parapets) and battlements built on the top. The battlements are designed to give the defenders a clear view of and shot at the enemy without exposing themselves to return fire. The crenellations, the open part of the battlements, are used by bowmen or siege machines. They also serve as lookout points for viewing the countryside. The merlons, the stone part of the battlements, are used for cover. Some castle walls also have swinging pieces of wood covering the crenellations.

Putlogs: Just below the battlements, some castles also have putholes—square holes into which putlogs are fitted. The putlogs project out over the edge of the wall, and sheets of wood can then be placed on them. Gaps in the wood are



Machicolations



used for dropping things onto attackers far below.

Attack slits: Slits are built into the walls at various levels. Vertical slits are used by bowmen; cross-shaped slits can be used by either bowmen or crossbowmen. Smaller slits, known as meurtrières or murder holes, are sometimes placed near the gateways. They are used for shooting arrows or for pouring water on flaming gates.

Towers: The towers in a castle's palisade are often 75' tall. They are connected to the walls with doors or openings in each side; these openings allow men to move quickly from one part of the wall to another. A tower also gives the guards a complete view of each adjacent wall. Because these towers project out from the walls, men in the towers can shoot arrows at enemies on the wall or at its foot, yet remain well, hidden from return fire.

Breaking up a wall by placing a tower every so often also makes the wall easier to defend in case a part of the wall is breached. Smaller sections of wall are more easily defensible and give the enemy less of a hold. Often, a small bridge connects the wall and tower. This bridge may be removed if a section of wall is about to be overcome, thus isolating the tower.

Towers frequently have roofs which are also used as defenses. These roofs have overhangs, called hoardings, containing holes used for dropping flaming bacon and fat, stones, or anything else on hand. The roofs are also a danger, however, as they are usually constructed of wood and are flammable.

As an alternative to wooden hoardings,

stone machicolations may be built. A machicolation is the top part of a tower, having walls that project out from the lower walls of the tower. Around the edges of this construct are several drop holes. Stone machicolations won't burn, but they are difficult to build and are far more expensive than wooden constructs.

Circular or polygonal towers are designed without sharp angles so they cannot be weakened by bores or rams. Weapons have a greater chance of glancing off walls of this design, thus harming the attacker. In addition, ladders will not lean as easily against a rounded tower.

Some towers also have turrets that provide an additional height for overseeing the battlefield and firing down at the enemy. The turrets in Dover Castle's hold, for example, rise 12' above the tower tops.

Gate and postern: For many of the oldest castles in our world, the weakest points of defense were the gatehouse and the postern (rear gate). For this reason, a lot of time was spent designing special reinforcements for the gates. Through the use of a combination of these defenses, the gatehouse in many medieval castles eventually turned out to be the strong point of the defense system. Any group deciding to forcefully enter the castle via its gatehouses should think carefully. These defenses include the drawbridge, the barbican, the portcullis, and multiple gates.

Drawbridges: A drawbridge over a ditch or moat makes it harder for the enemy to get into the castle. Nonetheless, the bridge does not take long to smash down and replace with boards. As an extra protection, the drawbridge may be built like a seesaw — when raised, the castle-end of

the bridge drops into a pit in the gatehouse that is normally covered when the drawbridge is down. The pit creates a bit of a problem in daily living, but it serves a useful purpose as a hurdle for attackers to overcome. The mechanism for lifting and lowering the drawbridge requires a separate room next to it.

Barbican: Located in front of the gatehouse, the barbican is usually two parallel walls designed to force the enemy into a narrow passage a few at a time instead of en masse. Weapon use is restricted in these narrow passages, allowing the defenders to shoot arrows and throw fire at the onrushing enemy. Some barbicans also include a sharp angle to make it harder to use siege machines or long-range weapons against the gates.

Portcullis: This is an iron grating that can be raised or lowered quickly, providing an additional defense for castle inhabitants. Although arrows can be shot through this gate, men are unable to get through it. The bottoms of the portcullis bars are often sharpened to stop people from trying to slip underneath the gate as it falls.

Multiple gates: Some castles have up to four separate gates of various types that must be passed to get into the outer bailey. The space in front of each gate is guarded by towers. The enemy can be shot at through the murder holes and arrow slits as the men crowd into the gap between the gates.

The gate and postern are an important consideration for adventurers. Not only is getting in difficult, but fast getaways could also present a problem.

Staircases: Most staircases in castles are circular for two important reasons. First, a circular staircase takes less room. Second, on a circular staircase ascending in a counterclockwise direction, a right-handed swordsman climbing the staircase is impeded by the center post (- 1 to hit), while the swordsman coming down the stairs has no such disadvantage.

Tunnels: Sometimes a castle is built with tunnels that lead out of or to other parts of the castle. Many times, however, the use of these passages backfires; if found by the attackers, a tunnel out of the castle can also be used for getting in. A group searching for a tunnel has a 25% chance per turn of finding it (if they are aware that a tunnel exists and if they know of its approximate location); the chance of finding a tunnel when the searchers are unsure of its existence or location is 5% per turn. These figures may be altered to suit special circumstances, such as the use of secret doors or illusions.

War machines: Built on top of the towers, war machines are used to throw stones or other handy objects on the enemy. This is also a good way of getting rid of waste materials during a siege, an early form of germ warfare (in several medieval sieges, dead animals were used). These war machines, similar to the machines

used by the attackers, are not very mobile and are usually made of wood, so their usefulness is limited.

How defenders defend

In historical sieges, a castle could be guarded with as few as 10 knights and 40 men-at-arms. Usually, however, the number of each was closer to 100. While enemies are busy finding a way over or through each defense, the castle inhabitants can fire flaming arrows or use stone-throwing machines against them. (Damage from a flaming arrow equals the arrow's damage plus 1-2 hp fire damage. Check the saving throw of cloth vs. normal fire, as shown on page 80 of the DMG, to see if the victim's clothes catch fire.)

If the gatehouse looks like it is weakening, large buttresses shaped like thick mattresses are lowered over the wall to protect the gate (or weakened sections of wall) from a siege machine or battering ram. Men-at-arms can also drop large fork-shaped tools on ropes from the walls in attempts to catch bores or battering rams.

The knights of the castle often try to attack an enemy army before it reaches the castle walls. If the castle has a postern or secret tunnel, the knights might also perform this type of attack during battle, making sudden raids.

Application to gaming

How does this fit into a game? Well, the lord may build defenses to his heart's content, but he might still have difficulty in keeping his castle. For example, PCs may come along, and with the help of a few unhappy servants, toss the lord out into the snow. Just as no castle is completely filled with bad guys, there will always be a bad guy in with the good (and don't forget what one rotten apple can accomplish).

The DM needs a comprehensive list of inhabitants and frequent visitors, listing the personalities and loyalties of each. Also, the number and type of people patrolling the walls is important. If the castle is expecting a siege, or if the lord has just finished some questionable dealings, the patrols will be frequent. A schedule of the patrol is helpful in clarifying if a PC group meets the patrol or not.

Which of a castle's tenants would be most bribable? Where would they be located in the castle? What could they be bribed into doing? A scullery serf could not reach the postern and leave it open, and a child would not be strong enough to raise a portcullis. However, the right bribe could leave the drawbridge down, provide the location of secret entrances, ruin the supplies, and so on. A traitor must be very careful, however; a lord will take swift action at the merest suggestion of treachery, so the chance of approaching the right person with the right bribe is pretty slim. If the PCs approach the wrong person, will the group be discovered by the lord? Nevertheless, a careful group of PCs

could take over a castle without any battle, if the players do their homework. But this means that the DM must do his homework, too!

Sources for further reading

You can find over a dozen books on castles in any good library. Many of these include castle floor plans; most, however, are tour guides and give information about specific castles in England, France, and the rest of Europe. The following is a list of good reference books on this topic.

Brown, R. Allen. *The Architecture of Castles; A Visual Guide*. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984.

Brown, R. Allen. *English Castles*. London: Chancellor Press, 1970. (This book describes many facets of castles and includes castle floor plans.)

Davidson, Brian. *Explore a Castle*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982. (This is a good children's book which focuses on basic castle knowledge.)

Fry, Plantagenet Somerset. *The David and Charles Book of Castles*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1980. (This gazetteer serves as a basic guide to castles.)

Johnson, Paul. *The National Trust Book of British Castles*. New York, N.Y.: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1978. (This book provides the histories of castles in England.)

Kerr, Katherine. "The Care of Castles," Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology, Vol. VI. (This article describes typical castle residents.)

MacAulay, David. *Castles*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1977. (This book goes through the steps required to build a castle and explains the time sequence required in building it.)

Renn, D. F. *Norman Castles in Britain*. New York: Humanities Press, 1968. (This gazetteer has many color photos.)

Taylor, A. J. *Harlech Castle*. Cardiff: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1980.

Toy, Sidney. *Castles: Their Construction and History*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1984.

Unstead, R. J. *Living in a Castle*. Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1971. (This book describes the life of the castle tenant.)

Warner, Philip. *Medieval Castle*. New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1971. (This book provides lots of basic castle information for gamers.)

Ω



alatus

(a- LA-tus)

'A variety of winged leech found primarily in swamps and jungle regions. Alatus normally nest in the hollows of rotten trees, flying forth to feed after dark..'

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Seven Steps to a Successful Castle

Building a castle by the numbers

by L. Richard Baker III

Cartography by John Knecht

Do you plan to build a castle soon?

If you have a D & D® game character above 8th level, you should be thinking about it. The castle is often the crowning point of a character's career, the sign of prestige and power that marks her success. Every powerful wizard has his

forlorn tower, every cleric her fortified temple, and every warrior a castle to call his own. The challenge of designing and building a stronghold can add a whole new dimension to a campaign.

The castle-building system described in the following pages lets you decide just

The Tower Plan

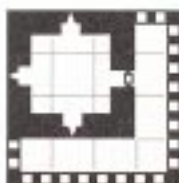
First Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor



Fourth Floor



Roof

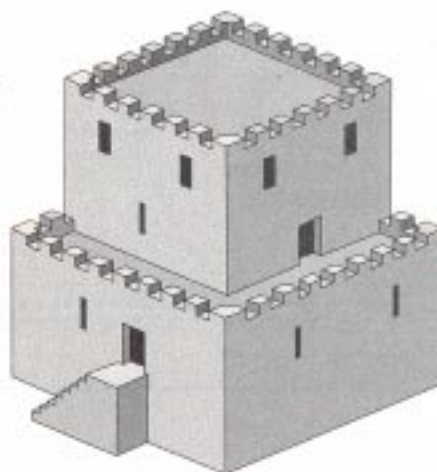


Key

	Wall		Door
	Arrow Slit		Stairs
	Window		Battlements

1 square = 20 feet

View of
Tower



how to put your character's fortress together. When you finish, you'll have a basic plan of your keep as well as an excellent idea of how much it costs and how long it will take to build. Be warned: Even the simplest castle design can cost 50,000 gold pieces! Building a castle is a serious financial proposition.

The construction rules expand on the system found in *DMGR2 The Castle Guide*. Having a copy of that book would be very helpful. Also, I'll show you how to put together five different castle designs, and give you a good start towards customizing your own designs from these basic templates. This system also includes several new castle modules that allow you to build smaller and simpler keeps, as well as add defensive features such as weapons emplacements and strengthened walls.

One more note before we get started: These castles are based on historical fortifications found in medieval Europe, but several fantastic variations have been included to reflect common stereotypes found in fantasy literature and role-playing games. Ahistorical options are clearly marked so that the DM can cross them out if he does not wish to allow them in castles built in his campaign.

Design guidelines

This section summarizes the design rules from *DMGR2 The Castle Guide*. In addition, several new castle modules (pieces, or "building blocks" of a castle) are introduced in Table I: The Expanded Castle Modules table. The table lists four characteristics for each module: Tech, Time, Gold, and Dimensions. The various entries on the table are explained below.

Tech describes the technological level required to build a castle module of that type. Societies with crude stone-working capabilities will be very limited in what they can construct. Tech levels are rated from 1 to 8:

- 1-Early wooden construction
- 2-Advanced wooden construction
- 3-Early stone construction
- 4-Advanced stone construction
- 5-Early gatekeepers and hoardings
- 6-Advanced gatekeepers and machicolations
- 7-Grand gatekeepers
- 8-Full concentric castles

Time and gold requirements list how many man-days and how much money it takes to build one unit of the listed castle module. A typical castle will have several towers and hundreds of wall modules, so remember to multiply the listed figures by the number of modules used.

Dimensions describe the feature's size and any notes about its composition.

Modules

Doors, windows, or arrow slits can be installed wherever the designer wants, but a good rule of thumb is that no more than one opening of any kind can pierce a 10' stretch of wall or building. Stairs are assumed to be included in any multi-story building.

All towers are two storeys, (30' tall and have a ground floor, an upper floor, and a roof. If desired, a one-level cellar equal to the half of the internal measurements of the structure can be added for free. For example, a stone tower with a 30' X 30' interior measurement can include a

15' X 15' cellar. These chambers make good storerooms or latrines.

Stone walls are assumed to be capped by a parapet. This is an open-air, crenallated battlement with an outer wall 2' thick, broken by merlons. This means that a stone wall is solid on the ground level, but part of the castle floorplan on its top.

Stacking modules

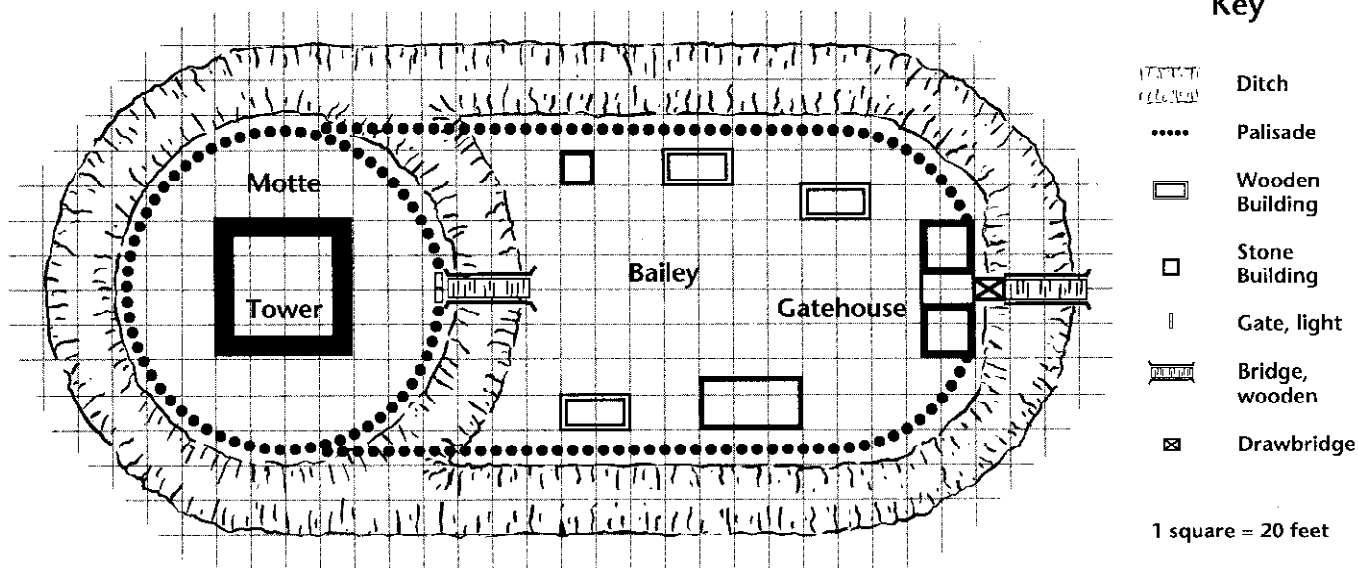
Many castles are more than one unit high. For example, a stone curtain wall module is 15' tall, but a curtain wall 30' or even 45' tall can be raised. Towers can be doubled in height by building one on top of the other. Barbicans, gatekeepers, towers, and walls can be stacked.

When walls are stacked, they require additional bracing. For each 50' length of wall, an additional wall module must be bought for each level to be stacked above it. A 30'-high wall requires one additional module per 50' length of wall, a 45' wall requires three additional modules, and a 60' wall would require six additional units.

A tower may support a second tower module of lesser size on top of it with no additional bracing, so a large round tower can support a medium stone tower. If the tower is anchored to a stone wall, it can support a second tower module of equal size. Towers cannot be stacked more than four modules high.

Barbicans and gatekeepers can be stacked by simply stacking tower modules on top of the towers that are included in the structure. A large barbican features two medium round towers, so two small round towers can be stacked on it.

The Motte & Bailey Plan



Definitions

Barbican: A barbican consists of two round towers with a building linking them together above an open archway or passage. They are often used as outworks or to guard gates. The small barbican consists of two small towers 20' apart, the medium barbican consists of two medium towers 20' apart, and the large barbican consists of two medium towers 40' apart. The barbican is two storeys tall, and its towers may include cellars or be stacked as described in the Construction guidelines below. All barbicans include a gate of the appropriate size and a portcullis at no extra charge.

Bastion: The bastion is a strong point in a stone wall designed to support a heavy war engine. It is basically a short, solid tower. Bastions are 30' across and may be round, square, angular, or even D-shaped. A bastion module stands 15' tall, but they may be stacked to bring them level with the surrounding wall. The bastion's price includes hoardings or machicolations to match the surrounding walls, but does not include the siege engine it is designed to carry.

Bridge/Causeway, stone: This is a stone or earthen roadway that is used as a road up steep hillsides, over lakes or wetlands, or even over dry ditches. A causeway module is assumed to be 10' long, 10' wide, and 10' above the surrounding terrain. Causeways can be stacked to create higher roadways, but cannot be built more than 40' tall without magical assistance.

A bridge can span an unsupported gap whose width is equal to its height, so a 40' causeway could span a 40' wide crevasse with one arch. (This is a gross oversimplification of medieval engineering, but it works for game purposes.) A causeway has to be built from the lakebed or riverbed up, so to create a causeway whose road surface is 10' above a 20' deep lake would require three causeway units to be stacked.

Like a stone wall, one extra causeway module must be allocated per 50' section for each level the causeway must carry above it. A 20' tall causeway requires one additional module per 50' section, a 30' causeway requires three additional modules, and a 40' causeway requires six additional causeway modules.

If the causeway will not leave dry ground (e.g., a road up a hillside or across a dry ditch), the embankment can be constructed from earth and reinforced with timber and stone. The cost and time requirements are reduced to 25% of their listed value if this is done. An earthen causeway can be stacked two units high.

Bridge/Causeway, wooden: The same considerations for a stone bridge apply, but a wooden bridge can be stacked to bridge a gap of 60'. If the builder wishes to pay an extra 50% in cost and time requirements, the wooden bridge can be rigged with a quick collapse framework

for easy destruction.

Building, stone: Stone buildings are assumed to have exterior walls averaging 2' thick and whatever interior partitions their builders see fit. Small, medium and large buildings stand 15' tall with one level; the greater stone building stands 30' tall with two internal levels, and the grand stone building stands 45' tall with three internal levels. The building dimensions are not required to be identical to those listed—the building can have any shape conceivable, so long as the square footage stays the same.

For an extra 25% in cost and building time, the roof of a stone building can be finished with standard battlements.

Building, wooden: Wooden buildings are assumed to have walls averaging 3" to 6" thick, and may be designed with any shape or interior partitioning the builder desires as long as the square footage remains the same. Great buildings and grand buildings have the same dimensions as their stone counterparts.

Buttress/Turret: The buttress is a tower with a 10' interior dimension (10' diameter for round buttresses, or 10' × 10' for square buttresses) and walls equal in thickness to its host tower. It creates a little extra room inside the tower, and also projects far enough from the tower's side to allow fire from the buttresses to affect enemies standing near the base of the host tower.

The buttress is a supporting structure that is built into a tower to strengthen it. Buttresses may be round or square, and are usually found on the corners of square towers or evenly spaced around round towers. Buttresses can be stacked up to one unit higher than their host tower; if the buttress rises above the tower roof, it is often called a turret. Buttresses can be left unstacked or partially stacked, running only part of the way up the side of a tower.

Small towers cannot be buttressed. Other towers cannot have more than four buttresses.

Ditch: Each ditch module is 10' long, 10' wide, and 5' deep. It is possible to build deeper or wider ditches by doubling or quadrupling the number of modules used for a 10' length of trench.

Gate: Gates can be built into palisades, wooden or stone walls, and wooden or stone buildings. They are assumed to be a part of gatehouses, barbicans, and gatekeepers. Light gates are made of 6"-thick wood, bound with iron, and protected by a sturdy bar. Medium gates are made from 9"-thick wood sheathed in bronze, iron, or steel and protected by several barring devices. Heavy gates are made of 2"-thick bronze or iron plate riveted to an iron frame, with locks and heavy bars.

A gate module is 10' wide and 10' tall. More impressive portals can be created by doubling or tripling the number of modules used. All gates come with a free portcullis if the builder wishes to have

one in stalled.

Gatehouse: The gatehouse is a strong building that protects a set of gates. Historically, gatehouses were used to guard a castle's gates before barbicans and gatekeepers became popular. They tend to be weaker than a full gatekeep, but are also significantly cheaper.

All gatehouses consist of two towers with a narrow passage between them. A structure links the two halves of the gatehouse at their upper levels. Gatehouses are built as part of the wall defenses and do not project outward as do gatekeepers.

Gatehouses are assumed to come with two of these features: drawbridge, portcullis, or medium gate. Their towers may include cellars, as with other towers.

The small gatehouse consists of two square towers with 5'-thick walls, measuring 20' × 20' on the interior. The two towers are spaced 10' apart. The medium gatehouse consists of two small square towers set 20' apart. Lastly, the great gatehouse consists of two medium square towers set 30' apart. The medium and great gatehouse towers can be stacked, if the builder wishes to do so.

Gatekeep: Gatekeepers are sophisticated defenses that enclose the castle entrance within a courtyard of walls and towers. The attacker must pass within the gatekeep to get near the fortress's main gates. Gatekeepers can be assumed to contain medium gates and portcullises, if desired. The tower portions of the gatekeep can be stacked or built with cellars.

The lesser gatekeep consists of two small round towers set 20' apart, with a linking structure like a barbican. It is set 20' out from the castle's walls, with 15'-high stone walls connecting the towers to the walls to create an enclosed killing ground before the castle's gates.

The greater gatekeep is built around four medium round towers. The forward pair of towers is 20' apart and 20' in front of the castle walls, and is connected by a linking structure. The rear pair of towers is built into the castle walls. Stone walls 15' high join the outer and inner pair of towers.

The grand gatekeep uses large round towers in place of the medium towers. The outer towers are spaced 40' apart, and are 39' in front of the inner pair of towers.

Moat/Channel: Moats are nothing more than ditches that are finished so that they will contain water permanently. A channel is a waterway built to connect the moat with the body of water that will be used to fill it.

Motte: A motte is an artificial mound that provides a castle with the advantage of height. One unit of motte raises a 10' square section of earth 5' in height. Mottes must be at least twice as wide and long as they are tall.

Motte modules also can be used to create artificial islands. The lakebed or riverbed cannot be more than 20' deep. Artificial

islands double building times and costs of the motte.

Palisade: A palisade is a wall of wooden posts about six inches thick. It is often used on the defending side of a ditch. Each palisade module is 10' long and 5' tall. Palisade modules can be stacked up to 20' in height, but if the builder wants his troops to have a catwalk to fight from, a wooden wall module will have to be bought for each stacked palisade module.

Reinforcement: It is possible to build towers and other buildings extra-strong by thickening the bases and the foundations to resist the effects of sapping or bombardment. Reinforcing a structure adds 50% to the building time and cost, but adds 25% to the building's strength.

Walls cannot be reinforced, but they can be built thicker than 10' by building wall modules side-by-side. Each extra thickness of stone wall adds 50% to its strength.

Tower, round: Towers are used to strengthen walls and provide the defenders of the wall with extra cover and better fields of fire. They also can be used as free-standing defenses. Towers may be stacked as described under the Construction guidelines below, and may include cellars at the builder's option.

Small round towers have an interior diameter of 30', with 10'-thick walls. Medium towers have an interior diameter of 40', and large towers have an interior

diameter of 60'. Round towers provide less space than square towers, but are stronger and use less stone.

Tower, square: Square towers are built for the same reasons as round towers, but are less desirable because they cost more and are not as resistant to sapping or bombardment. However, people learned how to build square towers before they were able to build round towers, so the designer may be forced to use square towers.

Square towers can be stacked or built with cellars as described in the Construction guidelines below. Small square towers are 30' x 30' on the interior, with 10'-thick walls. Medium towers are 40' x 40' square, and large towers 60' x 60' square.

Tunnel: Each tunnel module represents a 10' x 10' x 10' volume worth of underground chambers. Tunnel modules can be bought to create dungeons, escape tunnels, or even as approaches to the castle.

Wall, stone: A stone wall's module is 10' long, 10' thick, and 15' tall. Walls can be stacked as described under the Construction guidelines section. The stone wall is assumed to include a walkway on its upper surface, with crenellated battlements.

Hoardings are wooden structures built at the top of a wall to allow defenders to stand over the wall's base and rain down missiles and other substances directly on enemies attacking the wall. A glacia is a

angled skirt of stone at the base of the wall that reinforces the wall against attacks by sappers or bores. A wall built with a glacia includes hoardings, if desired. Machicolations are very similar to hoardings, but are made out of stone. A machicolated wall includes a glacia, if desired.

A wall can be built to include a postern gate, which is a small doorway through which defenders can sally to launch raids and counterattacks against their enemies. Add the postern cost to the wall's normal cost.

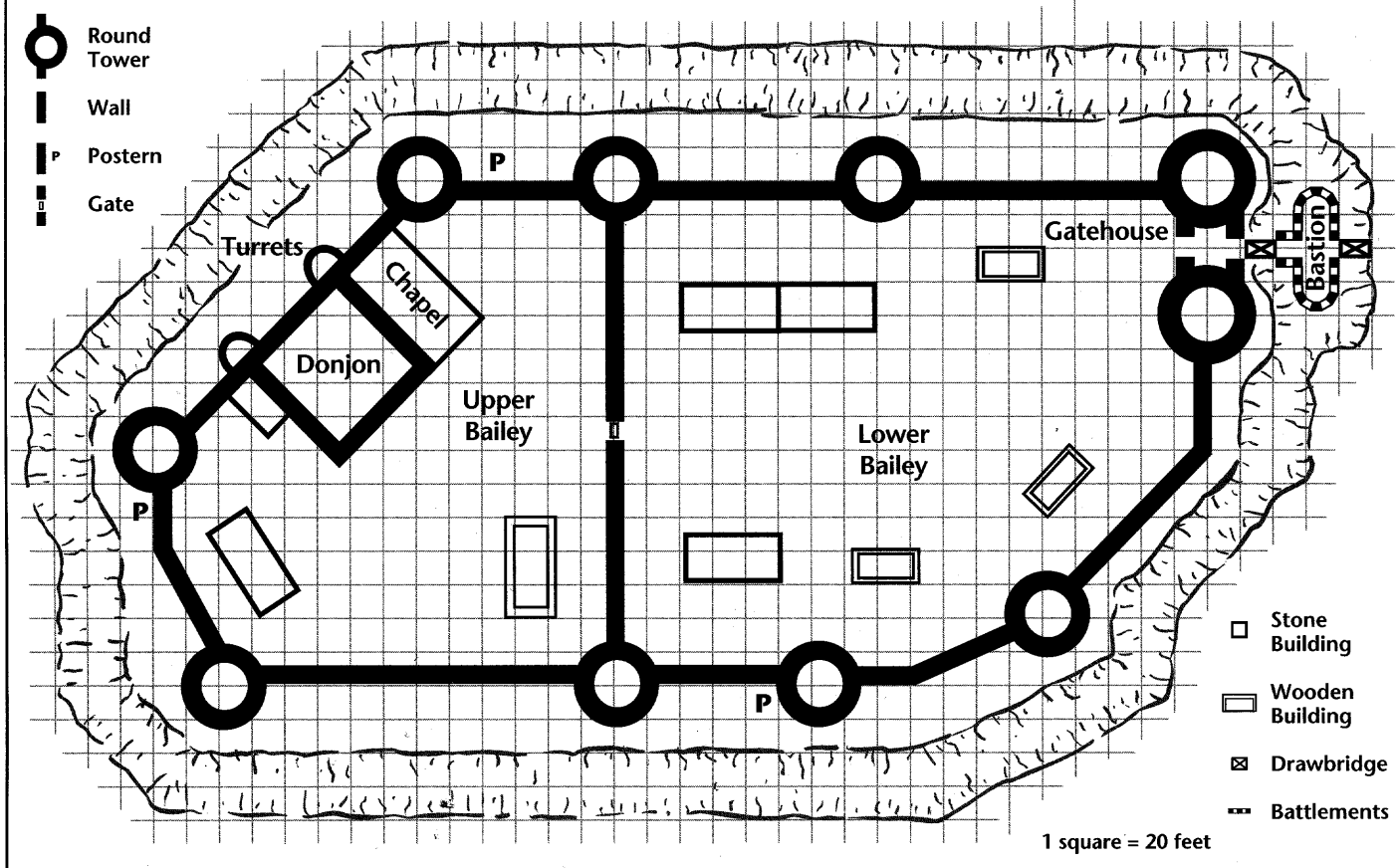
Wall, wooden: A section of wooden wall is 10' long, 15' high, and 3" thick. It can be stacked using the same rules for stacking stone walls. Wooden walls also can be used as flooring; each unit of wooden flooring covers 150' square feet.

Construction guidelines

This castle-design process includes seven basic steps, from choosing the site to actually beginning construction. In regular play, a character would be expected to go to extensive trouble to secure permission to put up a castle, find a suitable wilderness to tame, and convince the locals to aid him—but we'll skip over that material here. We're only interested in showing you how to design and build your castle.

The seven steps to building your castle are:

The Curtain Wall Plan



1. Select a site.
2. Choose a style of castle.
3. Determine approaches.
4. Customize design.
5. Finish design and add details.
6. Calculate cost and construction time of castle.
7. Build it!

By following these steps, you will be able to take your castle from untamed wilderness to the drawing board to a polished design just waiting for the first stone to be laid. Before you get started, you probably will want to have a pencil, a calculator, some graph paper, and some scrap paper handy.

Select a site

Before you begin to lay out your castle, you should decide where you're going to put it. We will assume that your characters have already won themselves a piece of land and are pretty sure that they want to construct a stronghold there. Take note, Dungeon Masters: This is a big assumption, and you should seriously consider orchestrating several important adventures around the acquisition of a title and land to build on.

The site you select should enjoy some strategic relevance. If there is something of vital importance in your domain, such as a city, deep-water harbor, or natural resource, you probably will want to locate your fortress nearby to watch over that asset. The castle is useless if invaders choose to bypass it to go after something of greater value.

You should refer to the article by Thomas Reid, "The Evolution of a Castle," in this magazine concerning castle locations and development before you actually select your construction site.

Once you have found a site you want to build on, you need to determine how easy or difficult it will be to build a castle there. This is reflected by the Production Modifier, or PM for short. The site's terrain; geography, and climate all contribute to the Production Modifier and have a significant effect on the castle's cost and time of construction.

During this step, you will figure out your site's PM. If you come up with an astronomical modifier, you may want to consider selecting another site and trying again.

To determine the site's PM, refer to Table II: Production Modifiers table. A castle's cost will be influenced by the climate, geography, and ground cover of the building site. Another important consideration is the location and quality of resources that will be used in the castle's construction. Lastly, the workforce, society type, skill, and morale also will be included.

Make a note of the figures listed in Table II in each of the appropriate categories for your castle's building site. Multiply all the different factors together to determine the Production Modifier for a castle built on

that site.

Do this calculation as many times as you want to determine the best location. However, the DM is within her rights to charge a 100 gp survey fee for each site you "survey" (perform the calculation for). After all, someone has to go out and examine each site!

Each of these factors is discussed in detail in DMGR2 *The Castle Guide*. Table II simply repeats the PM associated with each one. If there is any debate over what kind of climate, resources, or workforce prevails at any given site, the DM gets the final word.

Choose a style

Now that you have an idea of where this castle will be built, you should select a basic castle style. Most castles will fall into one of five different categories. These are: the tower; the motte-and-bailey; the curtain-wall defense; the enclosed keep; and the concentric castle.

The tower

The cheapest castle to build is one with only one piece. A simple stone tower can resist small-scale attacks and provide a safe home for a party of adventurers. The tower provides no defense for any out-buildings or surrounding land, cannot house a large garrison, and has limited stores. On the other hand, it's cheap compared with the other designs.

Inside the tower, it was customary to design the entrance hall as a last-ditch defensive position. The room would have only one exit, and sometimes was built with arrow slits or murder holes facing into it so that the defenders could attack invaders who made it past the front door. These features are optional.

Take a look at Diagram #1, the Tower Plan. Naturally, this is a very simple layout. Simply pick the place where you want to build the tower, and place it there. Since this is the entire castle, we'll assume you want to build a large square tower, with a medium square tower stacked above it, for a total of four interior levels plus a cellar and the roof.

The tower's roof is assumed to open and battlemented. Each of the first two floors is 60' × 60' on the interior, and the 10' stone walls make the castle 80' × 80' at its base on the ground. The upper two floors are 40' square. A 30' × 60' cellar is included in the price of the large tower.

Some easy options to add to this design in the next step include: surrounding it with a palisade or ditch; adding turrets or buttresses; changing the tower from square to round; or building in a drawbridge to help protect the entrance.

Tower components: large square tower, medium square tower.

Cost: 25,800 gp.

Time required to build: 1,950 man-days.

The motte-and-bailey

This design uses a stone tower or a shell

keep as its donjon, or strongpoint, and surrounds the tower with a sturdy palisade. An adjacent area known as the bailey was enclosed in a second stockade. The bailey was often a small village, with stables, barracks, armories, smiths, and craftsmen. Usually, the gate to the castle led into the bailey, and a second gate led into the donjon or centerpoint. The donjon was usually raised on an artificial hill known as a motte.

This design is stronger than a simple tower and provides for a larger garrison. It provides good protection for the surrounding lands, since the bailey can house a number of people in time of war. Its downfall lies in the fact that its defenses do not support one another.

Refer to the Motte-and-Bailey Plan diagram. Our design uses a stone tower as the donjon, but many historical designs substituted a shell keep for a stone tower. The shell keep consisted of a curtain wall that boxed in several stone buildings. The center of this arrangement was an open courtyard. To build a shell keep, you buy as much curtain wall as you need for the exterior keep dimensions, and then buy stone buildings to fill the inside. Don't forget a gate!

Our motte-and-bailey design raises the central tower on a motte 30' high, while surrounding the entire castle with a ditch and palisade. The central donjon is exactly the same as the tower described in the Tower Plan above—a medium square tower stacked on a large square tower. As in the previous example, the builder gets a free cellar 30' by 60' in size.

In the bailey, we will assume that the designer needs to build two stone buildings (an armory and a barracks) and three wooden buildings (stables, a mess hall, and a storage building.) The entrance to the bailey is guarded by a small gatehouse and a drawbridge to span the surrounding ditch. The gates between the bailey and the keep are not protected by a gatehouse, and are considered light gates.

The ditch itself is 40' wide and 20' deep. Wooden bridges have been added to span the ditch between the motte and the bailey, and from the gatehouse to the castle approach.

Variations on this design may include: adding a gatehouse between the keep and the bailey; increasing the size of either the keep compound or the bailey; adding buildings to the bailey; replacing the tower keep with a shell keep; adding a drawbridge between the bailey and the keep. You can save a lot of time and money by finding a natural hill to build on, instead of creating your own motte.

Motte-and-Bailey components: large square tower, medium square tower, small gatehouse, light gate, small stone building, large stone building, three medium wooden buildings, 1,884 motte modules (200' diameter motte, raised 30', 2,321 ditch modules (40' wide and 20' deep), 18 wooden bridge modules (two bridges 10' wide,

20' tall, and 40' long), 145 palisade modules (1450' long palisade, 5' tall).

cost: 108,490 gp.

Time required: 12,422 man-days.

The curtain-wall defense

The curtain-wall castle descended from motte-and-bailey designs, shifting the defensive emphasis to the outer walls. Like the motte and bailey, the castle is divided into two parts: a bailey and a keep. The two parts of the castle do not support each other. Despite this flaw, the walls themselves are quite strong and are often protected by flanking towers.

Replacing a wooden palisade with a thick stone wall and adding towers as reinforcement vastly improves the castle's strength, but also makes the curtain-wall defense quite costly.

The keep is still the center of the castle, and may rest on a tall motte or natural hill. A stone wall surrounds the keep, and towers protect the wall. One gate leads from the keep's compound to the bailey, which is also protected by a stone wall and small towers. The keep and the bailey share a common outer wall, but an attacker who captured the bailey would still have to fight his way through the partitioning wall to take the inner compound.

Refer to the Curtain-Wall Castle Plan diagram. In case you're curious, the design

is loosely based on the castle at Arques, France. Our plan takes some liberties with the proportions and the locations of the towers and buildings.

The curtain-wall plan pinches pennies by making the donjon itself double as one of the towers defending the outer wall. This works especially well if the castle builder can position the donjon so that it commands difficult terrain. The donjon consists of the same keep we've used in the previous two designs, but we've added two turrets to anchor the outside corners of the keep and included an escape tunnel. Two stone buildings have been built adjacent to the keep to add to the lords living space.

The keep's compound, or upper bailey, includes three small round towers to provide flanking fire along the walls. A medium gate guards the entrance from the lower bailey. In the lower bailey, five more small round towers and a medium barbican (acting as a gatehouse) complete the castle's defenses. A bastion (actually two bastions built back-to-back) helps guard the gate with two drawbridges. Several extra stone and wooden buildings are thrown in to provide more living and storage space.

The outer walls of the castle are stacked two modules high, and are 30' tall. They are defended by a glacia, or stone facing

along their outer bases, and hoardings—wooden fighting platforms along their battlements. The small round towers are 30' tall as well, with two interior levels and a 15' × 30' cellar in each.

The entire castle is surrounded by a ditch, crossed by only one set of drawbridges. This is a fairly sophisticated castle when all is said and done, and you'll pay dearly for this fortress.

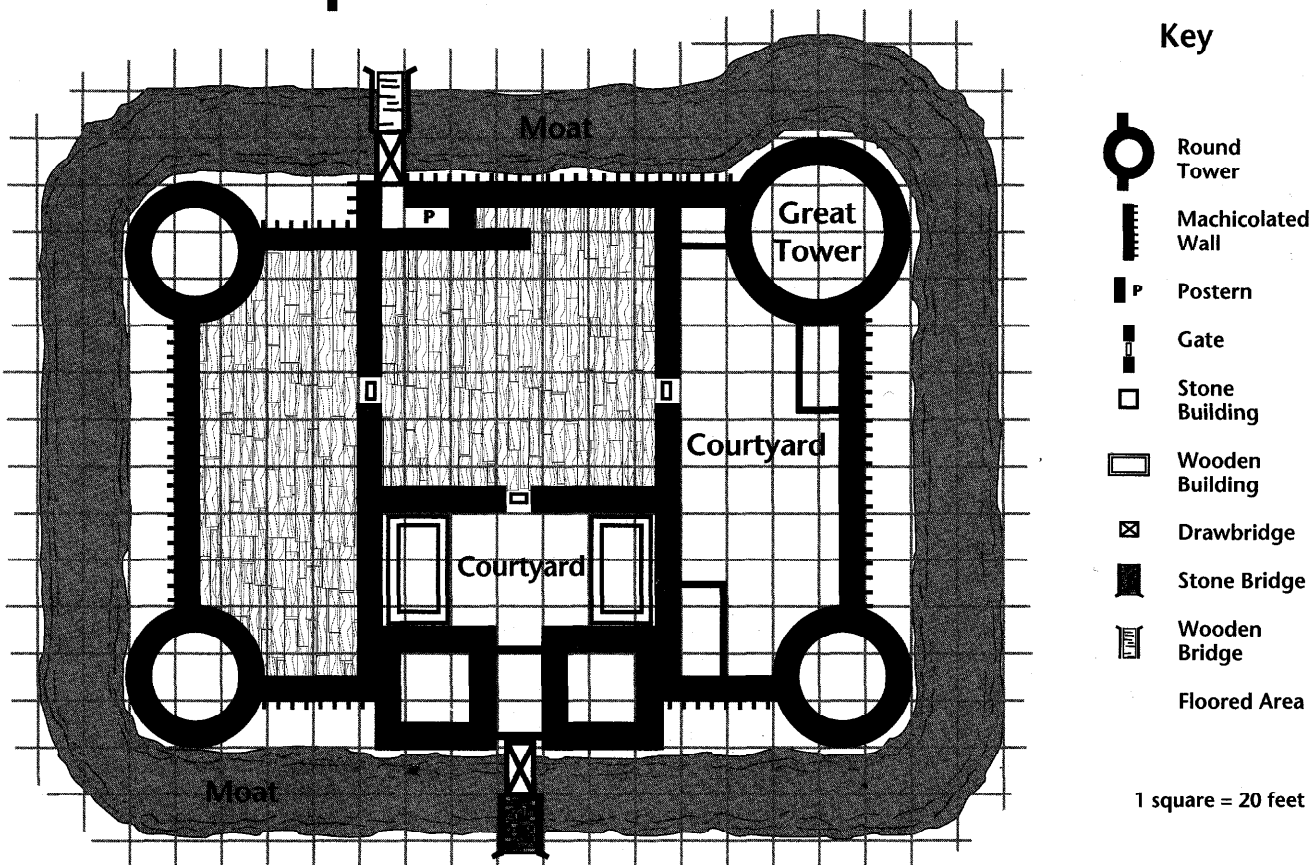
Variations on this design would include expanding the lower bailey to enclose a larger area, adding a barbican or outwork to help guard the approaches to the gatehouse, stacking the towers, replacing the wooden hoardings with stone machicolations, or replacing the barbican with a gatekeep.

Curtain-Wall Defense components: large square tower, medium square tower, six buttresses (stacked in two turrets), eight small round towers, medium barbican, two bastions, medium gate, medium stone building, four large stone buildings, one grand stone building, three medium wooden buildings, one large wooden building, two drawbridges, 119 stone wall with glacia (hoardings included), 148 stone wall modules, three postern gates, 3,264 ditch modules (40' wide, 20' deep), 50 tunnel modules.

Cost: 462,220 gp.

Time required: 32,100 man-days.

Enclosed Keep Plan



The enclosed keep

The enclosed keep is a design that saw very little historical use. However, it is often found in fantasy literature and role-playing games. While real-life castles usually included open courtyards (or baileys) between the outer walls and the inner defenses or donjon, the enclosed keep actually roofs over this space. The castle becomes one huge building—even though it may still include towers, gatehouses, and other structures.

The enclosed keep lacks the open spaces of the bailey and can house only a limited number of people before it becomes crowded. It is not good for area defense. However, it can be held with a minimal garrison and is perfect for an adventuring party's stronghold or a wealthy retreat. "The Castle on the Moors" from DMGR2 is of this design.

The enclosed keep has to be fairly small. If the outer walls are built to include too large an area, the cost of roofing the space between becomes astronomical. Another disadvantage lies in the lack of a second line of defense; once invaders are past the walls, they are in the castle. Even a motte-and-bailey design forces invaders to pass through the bailey before they can assault the keep itself.

On the other hand, there are advantages to this kind of design, especially in a fantasy setting. Its roof makes airborne attacks difficult. Since it is small and concentrated, it is cheaper than a curtain wall or concentric castle, while it is stronger than a simple stone tower. Its small ground area also means that it can be built in places where larger designs aren't feasible, such as small islands or steep hilltops.

Refer to the Enclosed Keep Plan diagram. Our design features three small round towers and one large round tower as the corners of the castle. An additional medium round tower is stacked on top of the large tower, and will rise two levels higher than the rest of the keep. The curtain wall linking the towers is capped by machicolations and is doubled in height to match the towers themselves.

A medium gatehouse controls access to the keep through a drawbridge and a portcullis. A postern gate at the keep's rear leads to a second drawbridge, guarded by baffled walls. Inside the main gate, the castle is partitioned into three areas by internal walls. Part of the castle consists of courtyards open to the sky, but most of the keep is roofed over with wooden wall modules.

Each of the medium towers has a cellar 20' in diameter, while the large tower has a cellar 30' in diameter. We also will include an additional dungeon area 100' square beneath the keep itself.

Since the castle is two levels high, we will need to buy wooden walls for two levels of flooring, plus a third section as a roof, for the space enclosed by the curtain walls. We will surround this keep with a

moat 40' wide and 10' deep.

Options for customizing this design might include: enlarging the keep by using medium or large round towers instead of small towers; providing a barbican to guard the gatehouse; adding turrets to the corner towers; stacking the entire castle another two levels high; or saving time and money by not building the moat.

Enclosed keep components: four medium round towers, one large round tower, medium gatehouse (drawbridge included), two large wooden buildings, two medium stone buildings, one small stone building, one drawbridge, four wooden bridge modules, five stone bridge modules, three light gates, 54 stone wall with machicolations modules (glacis included), 191 stone wall modules, one postern, 1008 moat modules (40' wide, 10' deep), 100 tunnel modules (100' × 100' dungeon), 506 wooden wall modules.

cost: 303,011 gp.

Time required: 24,622 man-days.

The concentric castle

Representing the ultimate in castle design, the concentric castle uses two or more curtain walls to create a layered defense. The outer wall and its towers are supported by an inner wall of greater height, also reinforced by towers. The donjon becomes obsolete in this design, but may still be used as a central citadel. A well-designed concentric castle built on good terrain can be impregnable.

The size of the concentric castle allows it to support a considerable army and house a great number of people. Frequently, the cisterns and storehouses of the concentric castle are the deciding factors in its strength. If it can withstand a long siege, it may not be worth attacking.

Refer to the Concentric Castle Plan diagram. This design is loosely based on the castle at Beaumaris, Anglesey, Wales. The entire castle is built on an artificial island in the middle of a lake, so the first order of business is to buy a gigantic motte with the artificial-island option. We will assume that the lake is 20' deep and that we want the island to stand 10' above water level.

We'll begin our design at the center and work outward. Although the concentric defenses have rendered the central donjon somewhat obsolete, we'll still build an impressive central tower as a seat of government. Two large round towers are built side by side and buttressed; because they support each other, they can both be stacked three units high for a six-level tower standing 90' tall. We also will place several stone buildings and a wooden building in the inner courtyard.

The central courtyard is surrounded by a high curtain wall anchored by four double-stacked medium round towers 60' in height. The towers are joined by a stone wall with machicolations, stacked two modules high for a 30' curtain wall. This wall is pierced by two heavy gates, which

are protected by two lesser gatekeepers.

Beyond the inner wall lies the outer bailey. The bailey is surrounded by a machicolated wall 15' high, with four small round towers to protect and support it. Ten bastions are added to strengthen the wall even more. The outer wall is pierced by two gates, protected by medium gatehouses with drawbridges. Note that two bastions are built jutting out on piers to provide extra covering fire for the approaches to the gatehouses. The bailey itself is partitioned by battlemented walls that ensure that an attacker who breaches the outer wall will be contained in one small area of the castle.

Two stone causeways span the lake that surrounds the castle.

This design is extremely expensive, but would stand against a ground-based or waterborne assault for months with a small garrison. If it has a weakness, it lies in the castle's vulnerability to magical or monstrous attack—but none of the other designs can accommodate those considerations, either.

Variations on this design would include changing its size by making the towers larger or smaller or joining the defenses to a small town and surrounding the town with a curtain wall to protect it. It is possible to save an enormous amount of labor (about half of the time requirement) by building this castle on dry land or on a natural island, instead of building an island from scratch.

Concentric castle components: six large round towers, 12 buttress modules, 12 medium round towers, two small gatekeepers, four small round towers, two medium gatehouses, 10 bastions, six medium gates, four heavy gates, three medium wooden buildings, two large stone buildings, four medium stone buildings, 200 stone wall with machicolations modules (glacis included), 122 stone wall modules, two posterns, 72 stone causeway modules, 14,496 Motte modules (artificial island).

Cost: 1,241,670 gp.

Time required: 113,726 man-days.

When you finish with this step, you should have a castle plan of the appropriate style. You can copy the plan to a piece of graph paper in order to customize it in later steps, or you can leave the plans as they appear here.

If you wish to generate detailed floor plans from these overviews, feel free to improvise. You can place doors, stairwells, windows, or arrow embrasures wherever you wish, but you should remember two things: first, a section of wall or building should not have more than one opening (door, arrow slit, etc.) per 10 feet; and secondly, it's a bad idea to put windows or exterior doors on the ground floor, since they can be stormed during an enemy attack.

Determine approaches

You now should take a look at the build-

ing site and try to imagine just how your castle will be situated on this terrain. If you are building a castle on a plain where it can be attacked from any direction, you shouldn't worry about this step—you will have to make certain that the castle can defend itself equally well on all sides. Otherwise, determine the avenues of approach that enemies are likely to take if your castle is assaulted.

Again, you may want to refer to Thomas Reid's article in this issue about castle evolution and placement. In addition to suggesting a plan for your fortress, a diagram of the surrounding area also can be useful for determining siege lines and artillery positions should your castle ever come under attack.

If desired, the castle's approaches can be altered by purchasing enough ditch, causeway, or motte modules. Excavating is easy, but the DM will have to judge any efforts to create ramps and roadways by moving earth around. Mark these improvements on a copy of your terrain diagram, and don't forget to include this in the castle's overall price.

Customize the plan

In this step, you can alter your design to fit the exact terrain and considerations for the castle you are building. You may want

to substitute pieces to make your castle stronger (and more expensive), or try to economize by settling for smaller and cheaper components. Stone and wooden buildings can be added to the courtyards and baileys to provide for additional barracks, storerooms, and work areas. New outworks can be used to guard the approaches to the castle.

The most important consideration in this step is the castle's topography and how to take advantage of it. Does the castle sit on a natural hilltop? If it does, you probably don't need to buy a motte, but you may need to build a causeway to the castle's gates. Does one wall of the castle overlook impassable terrain, such as a gorge or a body of water? You may be able to save money by skimping on the defenses there, since it is unlikely an attacker will be able to assault the wall in question.

Very few castles sit on a flat plain that is equally vulnerable in all directions—look for ways to channel attackers toward your castle's strong points. For example, by locating your castle on an artificial island in the middle of a lake, you can guarantee that the attackers will be forced to concentrate their assault on the causeway that bridges the lake.

You can use the generic castle designs here as a guide in customizing your own

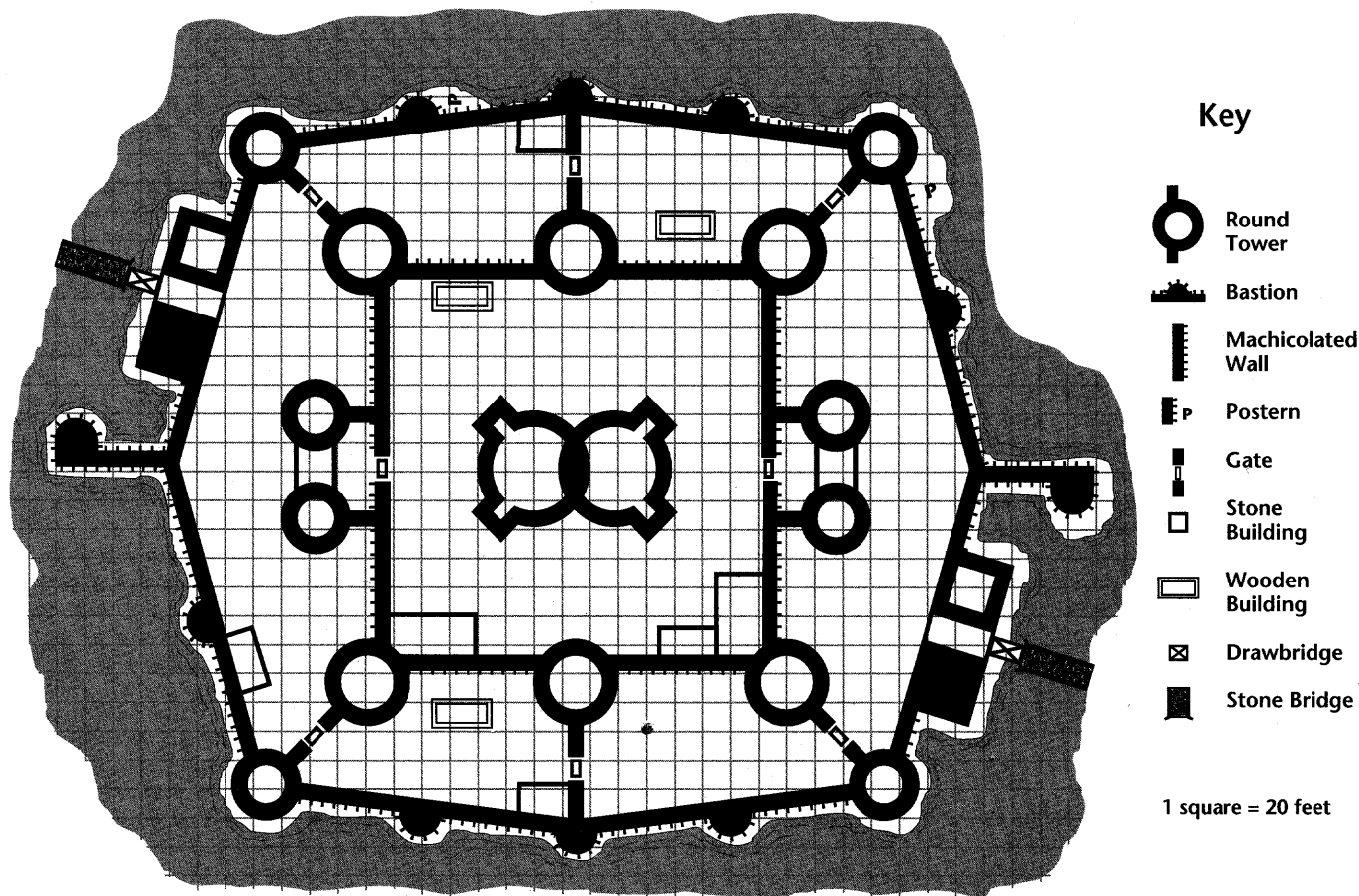
design, but don't be constrained by them. You may be able to alter the designs provided and re-calculate only the portions you changed, but don't be afraid to throw them out and start from scratch.

Finish and add details

In this step, you should add any final details to the design that you wish to include. Are there any magical or unusual features that aren't covered otherwise, such as crocodiles in the moat or a stone golem gatekeeper? Are there any spells that will be used to add to the castle's defenses, such as a permanent *wall of fog*, *wall of ice*, *wall of fire*, or *distance distortion*? How about a landing platform for hippogriff cavalry? In most cases, the DM will have to decide what a special feature will cost and how it must be constructed.

One special note on finishing the design: The times and costs for castle components that appear in this article assume that the designer is creating a typical castle that will be used as both a fortress and a living place. The builder may skimp on all unnecessary luxuries and build a spartan keep that is suitable for use only as a military base, or he may decide that his castle should be a work of art that is pleasing to the eye. Spartan castles save the builder 25% of the normal time and gold

The Concentric Castle Plan



costs, while extravagant castles cost 50% more than normal and require 50% additional construction time.

Calculations

Now, add up the costs and time requirements of all the components of your castle. This represents the fortress's basic cost. Don't forget to increase or decrease this figure if you are making your castle a spartan keep or an extravagant work of art. Once you have totalled the castle's basic cost and time of building, you will need to add 10% to both figures to reflect overhead costs.

Overhead costs cover the cost of recruiting and training laborers, housing and feeding them while they're on the job, putting furniture in the castle when it's finished, and paying any architect's fees or other special charges. Overhead does not

cover the costs of hiring and equipping a garrison, paying for any unusual hirelings or services such as spell-casters, or the costs of any sabotage or disasters, although routine mishaps are considered to be part of the building process.

Take the new costs and times with overhead included and multiply these by the Production Modifier mentioned above.

This will give you the castle's actual cost and time of building.

Example: Eric is building an enclosed keep and decided that the basic plan was good enough for him. The enclosed keep has a base time requirement of 18,932 man-days and a base cost of 254,712 gp. The overhead increases these figures to 20,825 and 280,183 respectively. Eric already calculated his Production Modifier to be 2.34, so his final building time is 48,730 and the final cost is 655,628 gp.

To determine the workforce required to build your castle, take the final construction time and divide it by 52. This will give you the number of workmen required to build your castle in one year of continuous work. In our example above, Eric finds that his character will need to find 938 laborers to do the job. Remember, the castle and overhead costs cover the worker's wages for an average workforce.

You can increase the speed of construction by hiring more workers. Each extra worker costs 520 gp per year, including food,

Table I: Expanded Castle Modules table

Name	Tech	Time	Cost	Dimensions
Barbican, small	4	1,665	28,600	50' x 120'
Barbican, medium	5	2,050	35,200	60' x 140'
Barbican, large	6	2,880	49,500	60' x 160'
*Bastion	4	450	6,700	30' x 30'
*Bridge/Causeway, stone	4	32	370	10' x 10' x 10'
*Bridge/Causeway, wooden	3	6	20	10' x 10' x 10'
Building, small stone	3	64	2,000	20' x 20'
Building, medium stone	3	96	3,000	20' x 40'
Building, large stone	3	144	4,500	30' x 60'
Building, great stone	4	300	10,000	30' x 60'
Building, grand stone	4	600	19,000	40' x 80'
Building, small wooden	1	8	40	20' x 20'
Building, medium wooden	1	12	60	20' x 40'
Building, large wooden	1	18	90	30' x 60'
Building, great wooden	2	40	200	30' x 60'
Building, grand wooden	2	75	375	40' x 80'
*Buttress/Turret	5	360	6,000	30' x 30'
Ditch	1	2	10	10' x 10' x 5'
Drawbridge	2	40	550	20' long
*Gate, light	1	15	175	10' x 10' high
*Gate, medium	2	85	630	10' x 10' high
*Gate, heavy	3	225	13,800	10' x 10' high
*Gatehouse, small	3	980	16,500	70' x 30'
*Gatehouse, medium	4	1,550	25,800	120' x 50'
*Gatehouse, great	5	2,040	34,800	150' x 80'
Gatekeep, lesser	5	1,950	33,275	70' x 120'
Gatekeep, greater	6	4,625	40,620	140' x 140'
Gatekeep, grand	7	6,410	110,800	200' x 190'
Moat/Channel	3	6	30	10' x 10' x 5'
Motte	1	2	10	10' x 10' x 5'
Palisade	1		5	10' long, 5' high
*Reinforcement		(x1.5)	(x1.5)	
Tower, small round	4	720	12,000	50' exterior
Tower, medium round	5	900	15,000	60' exterior
Tower, large round	6	1,260	21,000	80' exterior
Tower, small square	3	840	14,000	50' x 50'
Tower, medium square	4	1,080	18,000	60' x 60'
Tower, large square	5	1,440	24,000	80' x 80'
Tunnel	4	25	100	10' x 10' x 10'
Wall, stone	3	30	500	10' x 10' x 15'
Wall, stone w/hoarding	4	36	600	10' x 10' x 15'
Wall, stone w/glacis	5	44	720	10' x 10' x 15'
Wall, w/machicolation	6	53	864	10' x 10' x 15'
Wall, stone and postern	4	5	100	10' x 10' x 15'
Wall, wooden	1	1	5	10' x 15' x 3"

*New castle modules (explained in text).

**Table II:
Production Modifiers table**

Climate

Arctic: 4.00
Moderate: 1.00
Sub-arctic: 2.50
Sub-tropical: 1.25
Temperate: 1.25
Tropical: 1.75

Geography

High mountains: 4.00
Foothills: 1.50
Moderate mountains: 3.00
Rolling hills: 1.00
Low mountains: 2.00
Plains: 0.75

Ground cover

Jungle: 3.00
Grasslands: 0.75
Dense forest: 2.00
Barren: 1.50
Light forest: 1.50
Desert: 2.00
Scrub: 1.00
Swamp: 2.00

Resource availability

Distant and poor: 2.00
Distant and good: 1.50
Near and poor: 1.25
Near and good: 1.00

Local social structure

Nomadic: 2.50
Semi-nomadic: 1.75
Primitive agricultural: 1.25
Agricultural: 1.00
Advanced agricultural: 0.75

Workers' skill

Very poor: 3.00
Poor: 2.00
Average: 1.00
Good: 0.75
Very good: 0.50

Workers' morale

Very poor: 3.00
Poor: 2.00
Average: 1.00
High: 0.75
Very high: 0.50

housing, and skilled supervisors. If the workforce is doubled, the construction time is cut to 75% of normal. If the workforce is quadrupled, the time is cut to 50% of normal.

You can save money by hiring fewer laborers, although this will slow construction time. Each man cut from the labor pool saves 10 gp per week of construction. If enough workers are removed to reduce the workforce to 75% of its normal value, the construction time is doubled. If the force is cut to 50% of its standard value, the construction time is quadrupled.

Example: Eric's character is short on money and wants to cut the workforce down to 75% of its normal value. He hires 704 men instead of 938, saving 2,360 gp per week over two full years, for a total savings of 245,440 gold pieces off the castle's final cost!

In a role-playing setting, a group of PCs also can save money by assisting in the construction. The characters need not be an actual part of the workforce, but are instead devoting their time to making sure that supplies arrive as scheduled, monsters don't trouble the workers, and so on. Each PC can replace a number of workers equal to his level, and spell-casting PCs replace an extra man per spell level that they can cast in a day. A 5th-level wizard does the work of 16 men, by this calculation.

Magical items used in construction can

count for a number of men equal to 5% of their experience-point award if they are particularly suited for construction, or 1% if they are useful but not especially so. The DM will have to decide which category any given magical item falls into.

Monsters also may be used as additional or replacement workers. If they are well-suited to the task, each monster does the work of a number of men equal to 5% of its XP award. Monsters that are only moderately useful are only worth 1% of their XP award.

Unfortunately, castles can't be worked on all year-round in most climates. Cold weather or torrential rains will put a stop to the building process until the weather clear again. To determine the actual work season available, multiply the PM for climate type and ground cover to generate a Work Time Modifier (WTM) for the construction site. Eric's castle, described above, has a WTM of 1.875. Divide 52 by the WTM to determine how many weeks are available for work in a given year. In the case of Eric's castle, the result is 27 weeks per year.

If the result is more than 52, then the work just goes that much faster—you've found an ideal place to build a castle.

Since Eric skimped on his workforce, his castle's basic building time was two years, or 104 weeks. Since 27 weeks of work can be done in any given year, it will take his character a little less than four years to build the castle.

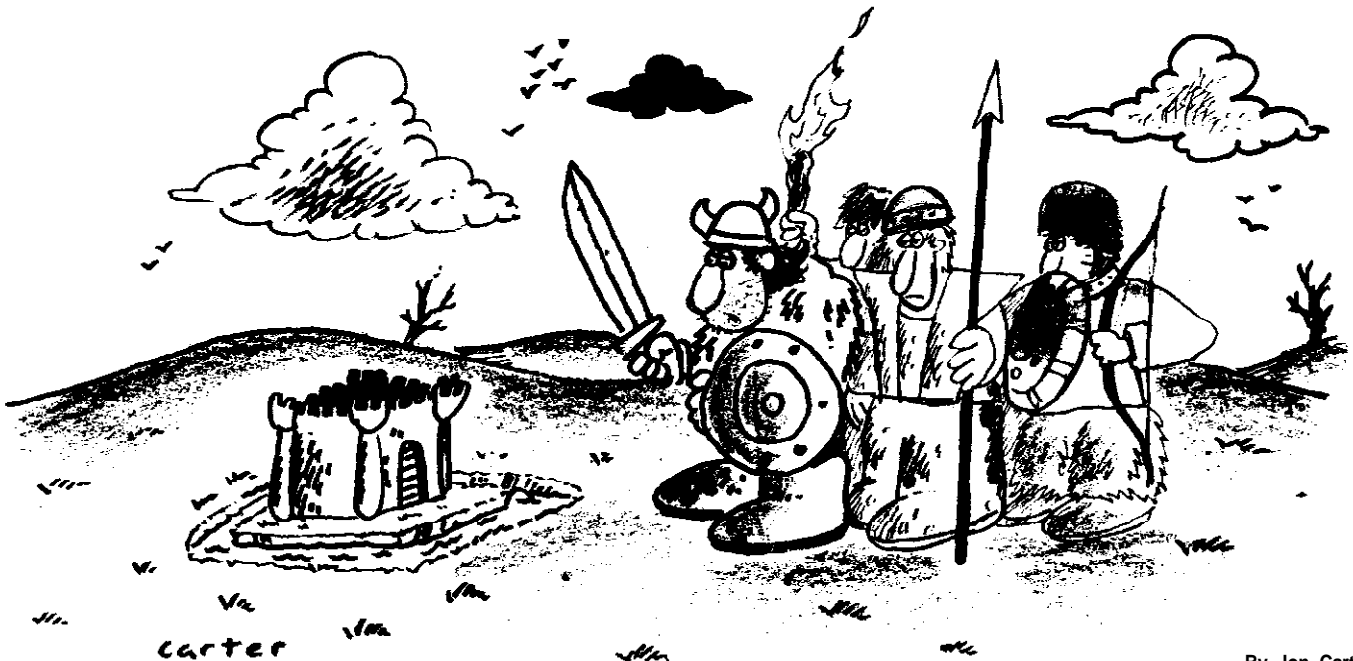
Build the castle

Now you have a castle design, an idea of how long it will take to build it, and how much it will all cost. You're ready to begin! Of course, the campaign doesn't conveniently stop for your characters when they undertake a project of this scope. All kinds of trouble can find the PCs while they're building their fortress.

War may come before the PCs are ready for it, and the attackers may make a beeline for the partially-completed castle to tear it down before it is finished. A war on the other side of the kingdom may arise, and the lord of the land may insist on drafting some of the workers who are erecting the castle. Monstrous incursions may force the PCs to hunt down the creatures troubling their workers. Corruption and treachery also can slow things down.

While all of these things may sound like a tremendous pain in the neck, a resourceful DM can make the process of building a castle a series of exciting adventures that can sustain a campaign for quite some time. Most PCs have spent years hunting down monsters or participating in intrigues at the request of others—now they get a chance to see what it's like to defend their own people and property against such horrible threats.

Ω



By Jon Carter

"Crud! I thought it was just really far away. . .
Well, so much for *that* castle raid."

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The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Things get supersized this issue as we hunt down the biggest threats the DMs Guild has to offer.

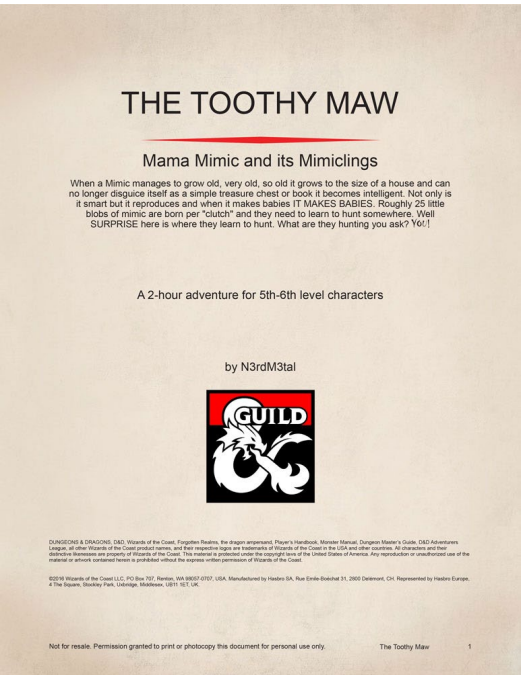


Go big or go home, as they say. Since the majority of us (thank you essential workers!) are already staying safe at home, that leaves only one option. We've trawled the DMs Guild to find the best gargantuan creatures to add to your game, as well as rules to help your party fight a truly impressive number of foes. Read on to find out more!

GARGANTUAN CREATURES

From the udaak on our cover to the nadir kraken Tromokratis featured in our *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* coverage, we're all about

the massive monsters this issue. Here’s what the DMs Guild community has been hatching from some extremely large eggs.



The Toothy Maw, by N3rdm3tal Gaming
Price: \$0.99 (PDF)

A successful predator is likely to grow in size and live for a long time, so what happens when a mimic reaches that point? The Toothy Maw tavern in Nick Holland’s intriguing encounter is an incredibly old mimic that has gained enough life experience to begin reproducing—and it needs to teach its offspring to hunt. A party of adventurers walks into a tavern... is not the start of a joke!

MORE INFO



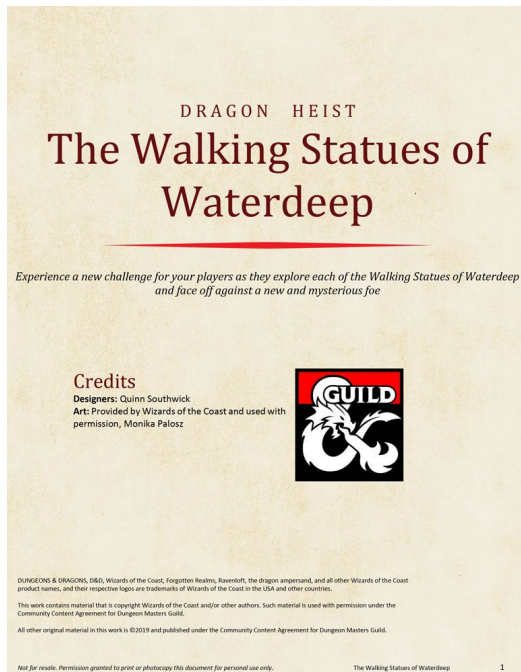
Gargantuas of Kara-Tur 5E, by Michael Freeman
Price: \$1.99 (PDF)

Kara-Tur’s gargantuas are truly monstrous species, both in size and ferocity, and this resource updates these creatures from the second edition *Monstrous Compendium*. Whether they are aberrations of natural processes, results of crazed magical experiments, or throwbacks to another age is unknown. While reptilian gargantua (think Godzilla at his angriest) are the most

common, humanoid, and insectoid versions might also be

encountered. Pray you never meet a krakentua, one of the most fearsome creatures in all of Kara-Tur, as these powerful demon spirits have a love of destruction and a need to enslave inferior beings.

MORE INFO



The Walking Statues of Waterdeep, by The DM Hero
Price: \$3.99 (PDF)

The God Catcher, the Great Drunkard, the Griffon, the Hawk Man, the Honorable Knight, the Lady Dreaming, the Sahuagin Humbled, and the Swordmaiden: few seem to remember when these eight walking statues of Waterdeep appeared and caused chaos and destruction, before stopping and freezing where they stood. Quinn Southwick's module includes detailed maps of their

locations, as well as a small playable module (*The Bloody Huntress*) that would fit well into any Waterdeep-based campaign.

MORE INFO

DESIGN THOUGHT

Inspiration can come from anywhere when you're creating a massive creature. Having a movie monster show up in game can be a mic-drop moment. We've already discussed how *Clash of the Titans* (see our preview of *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* this issue) chose to bring a Scandinavian kraken into a movie centered on Greek legends, and the blending of mythologies has long been a staple of D&D as well. A pinch of this, a dash of that...

The first edition *Monster Manual*, in addition to featuring creatures

uniquely devised for the game, pulled in monsters from myth, legend, medieval bestiaries, horror films and stories—and of course also from multiple sources of classical mythology. Where else could you face Dracula, the Wolfman, and the Mummy, alongside a naga, a lammasu, and Medusa herself? Even some of those uniquely devised creatures started off inspired by **dime store monsters**!

If you're looking for a massive enemy (as opposed to mass enemies, more on those below), there's plenty of inspiration to draw from movies—whether it's *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, *Kong: Skull Island*, or the colossal kaiju of the *Pacific Rim* series.

Those films all feature giant opponents battling each other, however. When it comes to humanoid-sized heroes facing off against giant foes, you might look to *Thor: Ragnarok*, *Cloverfield*, and of course *Jason and the Argonauts*' classic beachfront landing against the eighty-foot bronze automaton, Talos.

CREATOR Q&A: LOU FRYER, RALPH STICKLEY, AND NOAH MCCOY

Artifices of Quartztoil Tower sees parties of all abilities facing off against unusual golems and a rival faction who might be friend or foe. *Dragon+* chatted with writer Noah McCoy in Los Angeles, and editor Lou Fryer and writer Ralph Stickley in London, England, about their collaboration for **Nord Games**.

How did the three of you come to work together on this project?

Noah McCoy (NM): I put a ton of comments on a Kickstarter project that I was backing; I think it was Nord Games' *Ultimate Bestiary: Revenge of the Horde*. I kept flooding suggestions on there and extra little things that they should add-in.

Lou Fryer (LF): You were one of our favorite commenters.

NM: I appreciate that. I really love these products so I kept adding suggestions to keep making it better and better. Then [Nord Games CEO] Chris [Haskins] contacted me and said, 'Would you like to write a few things?' I'd had this adventure in mind for a long time and I sent Chris a quick synopsis on it, and we started from there.

How did you progress from the synopsis to the written adventure?

NM: I broke it down pretty simply as I like my modules to have a key adventure point at the start, include an exploration phase with a few different encounters, and then get to the main part of the story, which in this case is the dungeon crawl through the artificer's tower. Using that model, I wrote a few different scenarios and started piecing them together. With Ralph, Lou, and Chris's suggestions, it kept growing from there.

LF: I ended up working on the project because it centered around Garrin Ashcopse, who is a character from *Ultimate NPCs: Skulduggery*. As part of the creative team behind Garrin we ended up adding little bits in.

NM: Chris suggested we make an opposing party. I had read *Skulduggery* and I thought, 'Garrin's a bad guy—he likes to bind people to contracts and do some very nasty things. And he's a terrible father. Let's put him in there.'

Ralph Stickley (RS): What I find interesting is that Garrin is a really, really bad guy. But he's not just a villain for the sake of it, he's got very clear goals and he'll be fine if you don't get in his way.

NM: I also ended up creating Sala, who is one of his kids.

LF: That was really nice because Garrin is the father of a player character from our first campaign. We messaged our friend to say, 'Hey, this is your new sister.'

At the back of *Artifices of Quartztoil Tower* there's a discussion with artist Konrad Krogull and he mentions that all the images are from Garrin's point of view. Even though the character isn't in any of those images, he's still managed to sneak his way in!

RS: He never mentioned that while we were actually making it! I asked for comments on all of the art pieces and then he came back with that. I said, 'Why didn't you tell me?' I really pushed for the 'making of' section at the end to be one of the stretch goals when *Artifices of Quartztoil Tower* was in Kickstarter. I spent my teenage years watching the *Lord of the Rings* making-of material and reading the art books to see behind the scenes.

You created this module to work with campaigns featuring characters

of any level. Was the aim to make it as accessible as possible?

RS: That was Chris's idea. From the start he wanted an adventure you can pick up and slot in anywhere no matter what level the party is. The setting is also quite agnostic, with no references to a wider world, so you can drop it into any campaign in any world.

NM: I dropped the adventure into Grayhawk for my gaming group. I was running a fifth edition version of *Savage Tide* and placed it in the mountains, underneath the jungle. They climbed up the mountain in their jungle clothes and almost froze to death. It was great.

Did you have to playtest the module multiple times?

NM: I did my own playtest with it at the different levels.

LF: Noah and his group were playtesting it before it became a fully-formed thing. Then Chris took it to conventions, such as North Texas.

RS: That's a very good way of doing a lot of playtesting in a very short amount of time because you can spend the entire weekend running games.

One of the things we really enjoy in *Artifices of Quartztoil Tower* is the rival party who, depending on your decisions, may help you or hinder you...

LF: I love the Interested Party.

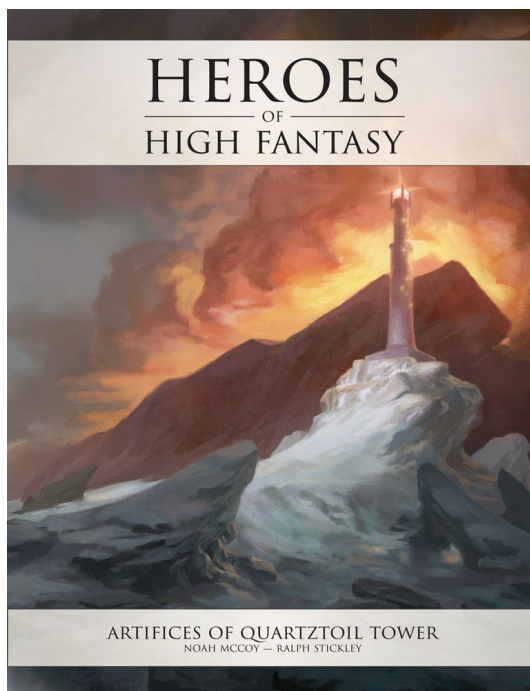
RS: While the obvious action centers on the steampunk golems, the Interested Party is the USP of this adventure. It's interesting to have this parallel strand running alongside that could lead to so many different outcomes depending on how the party of players interact with them.

NM: When I'm DMing and I'm watching the players I often think, 'If I had a character there, I'd be doing this.' That's the beauty of the Interested Party. The DM has an entire group of characters who can really mess it up for the players.

LF: If I was running that game, I'd be pretty sad if someone decided they were going to attack and kill the Interested Party. 'What are you doing!? They're so interesting!' But the natural reaction is that they're all horrible characters and clearly evil, so most parties will probably try and take them down.

Find more fifth edition content from Nord Games on the [DMs Guild](#) and at the [company's official website](#).

Download Artifices of Quartztoil Tower for free!



A town is beset by incursions from strange creatures; constructs of metal, magic, and old bones. All signs point to the mysterious Quartztoil Tower, standing tall over the mountains to the north and believed long abandoned. This three-to-five session variable difficulty adventure is designed to be played at any level, and can be easily tailored to fit any fantasy campaign setting. As social distancing is still a factor (please *Stay at Home. Play at*

Home.), we're giving you the chance to download the PDF version, as well as offering Fantasy Grounds and Roll20 versions for remote play. The PDF and Fantasy Grounds versions will be free for the life of this issue, while the Roll20 version can be accessed until midnight CST on May 31, 2020 using the code LHU1H-NAPZ1-QENUZ.

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[GET IT FREE FOR USE ON FANTASY GROUNDS](#)

Modules are not loaded automatically on Fantasy Grounds. To install a new module, place the .mod file into the modules subfolder of the FG data folder on your PC. Modules can then be activated for a given campaign through the Library window (or the Module Activation window) of the Fantasy Grounds software.

DESIGN THOUGHT: LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Legendary creatures deserve to create legendary encounters. It can be fun to surround your end-of-game boss with minions to even the odds against a party, but there's something epic about a single opponent who can handle the combined firepower of multiple adventurers.

Legendary actions allow a creature to take extra actions per round of combat, at the end of an enemy's turn, allowing them to successfully face off against multiple targets. Adding legendary actions to even a regular NPC makes them a formidable threat worthy of a final fight. Remember that a creature may have more than one legendary action to choose from and each unique action may have a different cost, drawing from a set amount of points that can be spent each turn.

Lair actions also reward a boss who lures the party into its familiar surroundings and if the creature is fighting on home turf it will be able to draw upon these extra abilities. Lair actions take place at "20" in the initiative order (as if the lair had rolled a 20 for initiative), and only one lair action can be used per round. These actions might work like traditional traps, hit enemies with an area of effect spell or bestow advantage on the boss for certain attacks or saving throws.

For a truly epic finale to a boss fight, nothing beats the false dawn when it looks as if a fight is over—but it isn't! That's where "mythic" actions come in. Having a party of adventurers celebrating their victory only to see a monster with mythic actions stumble back to its feet in a new form can be terrifying.

Look for more on mythic actions in [our coverage](#) of *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* this issue.

MASS COMBAT

A challenging combat doesn't always have to feature an enemy that's bigger than your party members. Sometimes the size that matters is how many members an attacking force has. The DMs Guild has plenty of options for dealing with mass battles (and if you swipe to the next page Sam Hanshaw gives us his *Behind the Screens* take on

this topic).

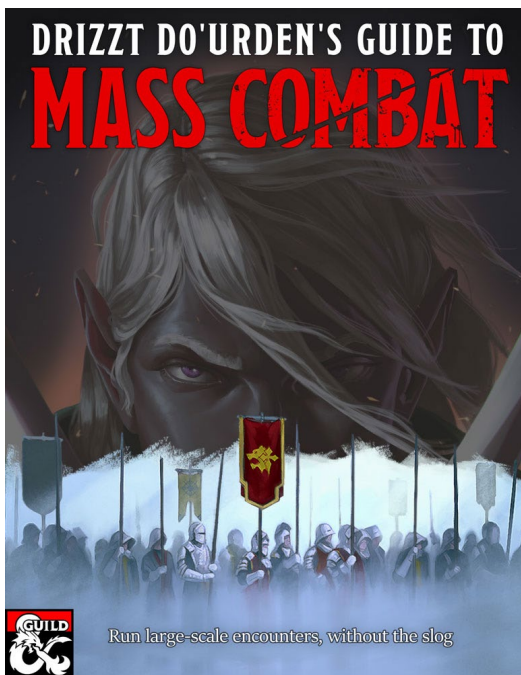


Wallen's Guide to Mass Warfare & Strategy, by Toban Barnes
Price: \$4.99 (PDF)

Running combat on a mass scale can be intimidating, as controlling such a large number of NPCs seems impossible. Toban Barnes' system uses "Army" and "Support" tokens to represent commanders and generals strategizing in front of a large map, pushing tokens into different positions as they simulate troop movements. Support tokens can't go into battle themselves and only

give bonuses to the Army token they're attached to. If you wouldn't normally use physical elements in your game, both the battlefield and the tokens can be written up into your notes and described to the players.

[LEARN MORE](#)



Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to Mass Combat, by Darrin Scott
Price: Pay What You Want (PDF)

The tagline for this guide to mass battles is, "Run large-scale encounters, without the slog." It uses a "Squads" system for handling mass combat, which allow a DM to run several creatures as a single entity without losing their identity or slowing down the game. Instead of taking nine turns, acting as nine targets,

and moving in nine different ways, a Squad only takes one turn and acts as a single creature. Alongside a system for creating your own Squads, author Darrin Scott also provides twelve ready-made stat blocks.

[LEARN MORE](#)

SIMPLE MASS COMBAT

MASS BATTLES MADE FAST AND EASY
This mass combat system provides a simple but mechanically rigorous way to resolve large-scale battles in 5th edition. With this system, there's no need to break up armies into discrete squadrons or "units" which then make individual attack rolls against one another, thus creating a pseudo-wargame which 5th edition is ill-equipped to handle.
Instead, the two armies are treated as a whole and their clash is resolved in a few meaningful rolls. This allows you to keep the focus on the PCs and their actions, while still having a sound framework that resolves battles in a logical but semi-random fashion.
The PCs can participate in the battle as officers or combatants, in which case the battle can be resolved quickly and present a fun minigame for your players, or the action can "zoom in" on the PCs as they undertake special missions amid the chaos of war, thus turning the battle into a climactic event.

MASS COMBAT BASICS

ARMY TOKENS
Before the battle begins, use the table to the right to calculate the relative strength of the two armies' constitutive forces, as measured by Army Point Value (APV). Each combatant in an army is worth a certain amount of APV; a lowly CR 1/8 conscript is worth 1 APV while a CR 10 champion is worth 140 APV. Write down how much total APV is in each army.
Next, assign each army a certain number of **Army Tokens**. Army Tokens are an abstract representation of each army's strength. It is best to use some physical objects you can place on the tabletop as Army Tokens, like poker chips. Give the more powerful army 20 Army Tokens. Give the opposing army a proportional (smaller) number of Army Tokens. So if the good army is 75% the strength of the bad army, give the bad army 20 Army Tokens and the good army 15.
Finally, jot down how much APV there is in a single Army Token. This should be exactly 1/20 the amount of APV in the larger army. This number will come in handy later.

ARMY VALUE CR of Creature	Army Point Value (APV)
0	1/2
1/8	1
1/4	2
1/2	3
1	5
2	10
3	20
4	30
5	50
6	60
7	80
8	100
9	120
10	140
11	160
12	200
13	240
14	280
15	320
16	360
17	400
18	440
19	480
20	520
+1	440

Simple Mass Combat, by Christopher Heatherington
Price: Free (PDF)

Christopher Heatherington’s system for handling large battles differs from the two approaches above. Instead of breaking armies into smaller units, it treats each force as a whole, allotting them a value using physical objects such as poker chips and adding elements such as morale. The aim is to resolve the clash more quickly so the action can zoom in on party members as they

undertake special missions amid the chaos of war.

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[BACK TO TOP](#)

HEROES OF HIGH FANTASY



ARTIFICES OF QUARTZTOIL TOWER
NOAH MCCOY — RALPH STICKLEY

HEROES OF HIGH FANTASY



ARTIFICES OF QUARTZTOIL TOWER
NOAH MCCOY — RALPH STICKLEY

CREDITS

Author: Noah McCoy

Layout & Typesetting: Ralph Stickley

Illustration: Konrad Krogull

Art Direction: Ralph Stickley

Proofing: Lou Fryer, Ralph Stickley

Cartography: Chris Haskins

INSTRUCTIONS

This adventure module is designed to be played at any level and in any campaign setting. The appendix includes statblocks for all of the monsters within this adventure at 'Beginner', 'Intermediate', and 'Advanced' challenge ratings. Beginner challenge rating is considered level 1-5, intermediate is 6-10, and advanced is any level 11 or higher. You are free to add more monsters than stated in each section of the encounter to make things more difficult if needed.

We've also included this beginner / intermediate / advanced challenge rating mechanic within the adventure itself. Various skill checks will require higher or lower numbers depending on which difficulty setting you're running. It's presented as follows: Make a **DC 10** (beginner)/**15** (intermediate)/**20** (advanced) **Strength check** to break down the door. This way you can keep the adventure flowing nicely without flipping back and forth to determine the appropriate challenge.

OVERVIEW

Artifices of Quartztoil Tower is a mid-length adventure which should fill 3–5 average gaming sessions of 3–4 hours.

It begins in the marketplace or main square of a town when the calm, peaceful day is interrupted by a hulking golem trouncing through town, smashing objects, and attacking townsfolk.

The party witnessing this should intervene and stop the rampaging golem with combat or by luring it into a nearby warehouse to trap it so it can be damaged and, eventually, destroyed by the town guards.

When the party examines the golem's remains, they find bones encased in the metal armor and the name 'Quartztoil' written in gnomish script. The town guard explain that this is the eighth construct they have encountered in the area in the past six months.

The party can then go on to investigate the name 'Quartztoil', leading them to learn of an old, gnomish, aspiring artificer, Penaral Quartztoil, who had a lab and workshop in a tower in the nearby mountains, but who has not been heard from for close to a century.

They are not alone in seeking the tower, however; another group, led by the halfling warlock Garrin Ashcopse, is searching for Quartztoil's library and the wealth of magical secrets therein. They will accept the party's help, subject to signing a contract, or work to hinder their progress along the way.

The party then travels to the tower, where they face some of Quartztoil's other inventions, both mechanical and arcane, and discover the dark secret of the 'shortcuts' the gnome used to complete his work and the price he paid.

Quartztoil was commissioned to build an army of constructs and, over time, developed an effective, if gruesome, manner of speeding up the process, using necromancy (and his own unfortunate workers) to power his creations rather than the costly and time-consuming enchantments used elsewhere. Quartztoil dabbled in 'improvements' on his own body using similar magic, eventually becoming a lich, though an imperfect one; his soul split between a (now lost) clockwork phylactery and the very stones of the tower itself.

Now ancient and quite mad, the withered lich has his remaining hapless workers shut inside suits of armor, preserving them to unwillingly power this new unquestioning and tireless workforce. Having no direction but the contract, Quartztoil has set them to work creating more and better constructs until, ninety years later, they have created a design he is happy with, and the constructs have been sent into the world to 'drum up business'.

INTEGRATING THE ADVENTURE INTO A CAMPAIGN

Artifices of Quartztoil Tower is designed to easily fit into any game world and could simply begin when the party enters a town (the nature of the town itself is intentionally kept vague to allow you to integrate it into your setting with minimal work). However, here are some suggested hooks to move your party towards the adventure:

Hook #1 - The party encounter a gnome craftsman, **Gritz Garick**, who has heard rumors of an old gnome outpost that specialized in golem constructs, but fears it must have been abandoned as it hasn't been heard of in a century. The gnome wishes to pay the party **100 / 250 / 1,000 gold pieces** for any notes and research they can uncover, which would surely help him with his tinkering. **Gritz** suggests they begin in the town where this adventure starts.

Hook #2 - One of the party who is interested in crafting and/or magic items comes across old notes from a gnome named **Penaral Quartztoil**. The knowledge is too tempting to resist. There is mention that many of his works were shipped out of the town where this adventure starts.

Hook #3 - While traveling, the party comes across an elven mage named **Odalleron Val'Thalis** being attacked by **8 crawling gauntlets**. Use **mage** statistics for Odalleron but he only has two 1st level spell slots left and his right leg is broken, meaning he can only move by crawling. The gauntlets cannot reach him; **Odalleron** is holding them back with a wavering magical barrier while calling out for help. If the party saves him, he will ask for their assistance in finding the source of the constructs, as he is interested in learning about them for research purposes. He needs healing and knows of a nearby town where the adventure begins where he can rest up and recover. He will also provide the party with a special set of rune patterns they can use when casting a *magic circle* spell to make it effective against constructs (casting the spell in this way requires 300 gold pieces worth of powdered silver and iron rather than 100).

PART 1: DOWNTURN IN THE MARKETPLACE

Read the following when you are ready to begin:

The buzz of chatter about the quality of merchandise, deals on goods, and the sizzle of fried foods being sold in the marketplace are interrupted by a loud crushing sound of wood snapping and metal scraping. Shrapnel and splinters of barrels rain down over the venue as several townsfolk emerge running from a cloud of flour and spices which were formerly stored in the now-shattered containers. The crowd suddenly stops and quiets as the ground vibrates from heavy footsteps. From the cloud, a large figure entirely clad in a heavy metal armor clanks and groans forward, and its destruction of the town square begins anew...

The **Quartztoil construct** will start destroying carts, barrels, and structures; whatever stands in its path. If something attacks it, then it will turn its attention on the attacker, but will not pursue over a great distance unless it is attacked at range.

On the third round of combat/interaction with the construct, a halfling town guard by the name of **Anthron** shouts to the party to, "Lead it this way!" **Anthron** then slings a stone that bounces off the **construct's** armored body which, in turn, starts charging after the halfling. **Anthron** has dealt with these sort of constructs before and is wise to their weaknesses. **Anthron** can answer several questions about how to best defeat the constructs, telling

them that they seem to be unaffected by charm magics and are heavily armored, but that they are slow and can be easily out-manuevered and out-thought.

The party can lure the **Quartztoil construct** to follow them through the streets after **Anthron**. A **DC 10 / 14 / 18 Charisma (Deception)** or **Charisma (Intimidate)** check will keep the **construct's** attention on the party and not on destroying other parts of the town, as will attacking it directly.

Anthron leads the party to a warehouse building where the town guards have laid a trap for the construct. The guards tell the party to goad the construct into the center of the room. A **DC 11 / 16 / 21 Charisma (Deception)** or **Charisma (Intimidate)** check will allow the party to get the **Quartztoil construct** into position. Alternatively, a party member can make themselves the 'bait' and attack the **construct** with melee attacks.

Once the **Quartztoil construct** is in position, **Anthron** tells any party member in melee combat to disengage with it. When the party is clear, the guards release a pit-trap, sending the construct falling into a 25 foot deep pit and releasing several nets holding scrap metal and wood raining down on top of the construct, pinning it down.

Once the **Quartztoil construct** is destroyed or contained in the pit, **Anthron** thanks the party and tells them the attacks from these constructs are getting to be increasingly dangerous. "At least this time we didn't lose anybody. Hey, you wouldn't be for hire by any chance, would you?"



As the town guards keep the captured construct subdued (if it still functions), **Anthron** will explain that the town and the surrounding farms have been suffering destructive incursions from these constructs for the past half a year. The golems have been very difficult to combat and only seem interested in causing destruction, but there have been several fatalities including, recently, the town sheriff. The town council is looking to hire a group of adventurers to put a stop to these repeat rampages, as they are impacting on the livelihood of the town. He will offer the party **100 / 400 / 1,600 gold pieces** if they track down where the constructs are coming from and stop their repeated incursions.

If the party agrees to stop the constructs, read:

Anthron is elated that you have agreed to assist the town. His first suggestion is to speak with the townsfolk about the attacks or try to find information from travelers at the local inn.

PART 2: SEARCHING FOR QUARTZTOIL

Assuming the party accepts the offer, **Anthron** shows them a pile of golem bodies. This pile has been depleted somewhat as some of the parts have been reduced to scrap to be used in pit traps like the one they have just witnessed. **Anthron** also tells them that the constructs always seem to approach from a north to north-westerly direction.

There are several things the party can do in the town and surrounding area to find out about the construct attacks:

- Examining the construct parts reveals the name **Quartztoil** stamped in Gnomish script on several armored parts. There are also bone pieces encased, and incorporated into the constructs structure. A **DC 13 / 16 / 19 Intelligence (Arcana) check** will reveal that magic of the necromancy school has been used in the creation of these constructs.
- Speaking with the townsfolk and succeeding on a **DC 12 / 15 / 18 Charisma (Investigation) check**, will uncover that about 100 years ago an enclave of gnomish tinkers under the leadership of one **Penaral Quartztoil** took up residence in the northern mountains. For a time, they repaired tools and implements for the town, and there was some word of them working for the military, but they haven't been heard from this century.
- Speaking with the townsfolk at inns and taverns and succeeding on a **DC 8 / 12 / 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check** reveals that four months ago, a local elven woodsman named **Yanathis Dreswood** set out to track the constructs. For a month he searched, returning every week to resupply. On his last trip he said he was going to scout out around the northern mountains. He has not been seen since.
- **Anthron** or other townsfolk can reveal that the first sighting of the constructs six months ago happened a few miles north where three farms were attacked and livestock was slaughtered and stolen. They can also reveal that when in town the constructs take to destruction over slaughter, unless provoked.

• Searching the town library about the name 'Quartztoil' with a successful **DC 13 / 16 / 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check** will reveal an old, dusty book containing a list of tinkers contracts made out to the leader of a gnomish enclave named **Penaral Quartztoil**. One of the contracts requires the delivery of payment to the enclave's tower in the mountains to the north. A map to the tower is attached to the contract.

Once the party has completed investigating around town or using other means to gain the whereabouts of Quartztoil Tower, they can begin traveling to or searching for it. If the party found the map to the tower, they can proceed there directly there without triggering any of the three additional encounters listed below. On their way to the tower, they catch sight of the pale glow of a campfire, initiating the 'Interested Party' encounter.

If the party only know the general direction of north or they wander around the immediate area, they will generate one of the following additional encounters:

- The party encounters another **Quartztoil construct** destroying the barn of a local farm. Three farmers (**3 commoners**) are attacking it from range and taking turns getting its attention to lure it close and then taking the disengage action to get away while the other farmers attack it.
- The party encounters another **Quartztoil construct** destroying a bridge spanning a small ravine that it is standing on. The party can attack it to save the bridge or wait, and the bridge will eventually collapse taking the construct with it. The construct takes **15d6 bludgeoning damage** when it hits the bottom of the ravine. Each member of the party now must succeed on a **DC 8 / 12 / 16 Strength (Athletics) check** to safely cross the ravine. Failure results in that party member plummeting into the ravine, taking **1d6 bludgeoning damage from their fall for each point they missed the DC by** (maximum 15d6).
- The party encounters **6 goblin bodies** that seem to have been crushed to death. A **DC 8 / 12 / 16 Wisdom (Medicine) check** reveals that the goblins were killed by a **Quartztoil construct**.

After the party has come across one of these encounters, they can make a **DC 10 / 13 / 16 Wisdom (Survival) check**. On a successful check, the party discovers tracks (consisting of several sets of humanoid footprints) cutting a trail that heads to the north-west for a way, before they veer off towards the pale glow of a campfire. If the party follows the tracks, this initiates the 'Interested Party' encounter.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

As the party travels towards The Tower they encounter a group comprised of two halflings, one half-orc, a human, and a dragonborn.

As they approach on the trail, read the following:

Off to the side of the trail, there sit tents and a small campfire barely smoking in the center. The central figure in the group is a gaunt-looking male halfling with aged features, salt-and-pepper hair, and an expression on his face that reveals he is no stranger to nightmares. He is speaking to the rest of the group in a frustrated, condescending tone about places they haven't looked while pointing to a map with a stick.

A younger female halfling with short blond hair and gray eyes sits on the ground next to him, looking intently at the other members of the campfire circle, as if she is cataloging each of their reactions to his words. She is dressed in a dark-green traveler's clothing ensemble topped with a darker green cloak.

A lank half-orc with red hair and coal black eyes, dressed in dark-brown leather, stares at the fire, half listening to the older halfling with clearly waning interest. Across from him, a raven-haired human female, dressed in navy-blue, looks over the map intently with each explanatory statement. The quintet is rounded out by a female, metallic-skinned dragonborn, who seems to be meditating more than listening...

The group is referred to hereafter as the **Interested Party** and consists of the following party: **Garrin Ashcopse**, **Sala Ashcopse**, **Grankus Feldspurn**, **Mara Sageprel**, and **Kra**, respectively. Their quest runs parallel to the party's goal of finding Quartztoil Tower. **Garrin** is interested in a great library that is rumored to be housed within the tower's walls, and is obsessed with finding it.

If the party attempts to pass by the campfire stealthily, they must beat the passive Perceptions of the **Interested Party** except for **Mara** and **Sala** who are actively keeping an eye on their surroundings, and will make a **Wisdom (Perception)** check. The statistics for the **Interested Party** can be found in the appendices.

If the party engages the **Interested Party**, they are civil, but not friendly. They only mention they are traveling, unless the players mention that they are looking for Quartztoil Tower. At that point, **Garrin** will change his tone to a friendlier one and begin to solicit the party's help.

Garrin will attempt to negotiate a deal with the party for getting his group to the tower and securing the library inside. He will offer the party **1,000 / 5,000 / 10,000 gold pieces** worth of gems and coin if they agree to secure the library and all its contents. **Garrin** will require the party to sign a contract for their services. This contract (see **Appendix E**) has the following effects:

- Each signatory must give a drop of blood to mix with the ink used to sign the contract.
- The contract acts as a *geas* spell with no saving throw for any signatory, and which lasts for one year.
- Each signatory has advantage on all saving throws against being charmed or frightened while under the effects of the contract.

The party is free to negotiate further terms of the deal and a successful **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Charisma (Persuasion)** check can add one of the following clauses:

- Payment is increased by **100 / 500 / 1,000 gold pieces**.
- **Grankus Feldspurn** will accompany and aid the party in his capacity as a thief.
- The cost of consumable equipment used over the course of the adventure will be reimbursed up to **150 / 750 / 1,500 gold pieces**.

The party can also refuse the deal; this will cause **Garrin** to cease conversing with them further, and ask them all to leave. If the party does not make a deal with the **Interested Party**, they will wait for them to clear the way to the library and plot ways to hinder them, culminating in an ambush after they defeat Quartztoil.





PART 3: QUARTZTOIL TOWER

Once the party reaches the general location of Quartztoil Tower, read the following:

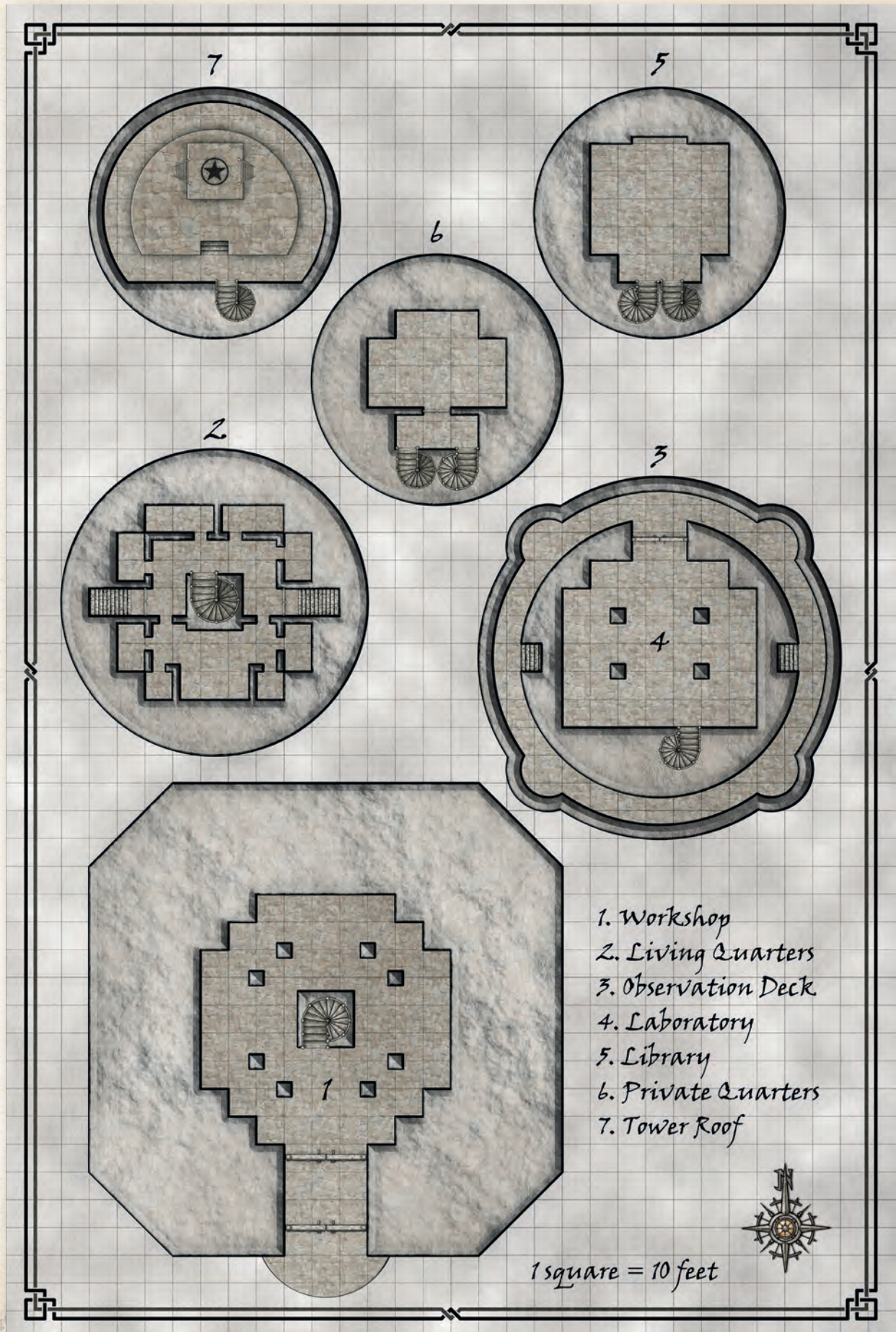
As you travel north for the next day-and-a-half, the temperatures begin to drop as your elevation climbs. Within the next half-a-day's journey, the slight inclines give way to the steep foothills of the adjacent mountains. As you reach the crest of the latest climb, you see the edifice of a white tower, slightly glistening in the fading light of dusk, an ivory spike built on a cliff reaching hundreds of feet above the valley floor.

The wind howls around you as you walk out from the cover of the trees that have, up to this point, blocked your view of the snow-covered tower, studded with glittering, crystalline quartz...

The gnomes that built Quartztoil Tower built it at the top a high cliff on the side of a mountain. A quick search reveals a cave at the base of the cliff and several trails leading up the mountain. This leaves the party a few ways to reach it by mundane means:

- The most direct way to the tower is a sheer climb up the cliff which can be accomplished in approximately five hours. Every hour, each party member must succeed on a **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Strength (Athletics) check** to safely climb. If they fail the check by 5 or less, they make no progress. If the party member fails the check by more than 5, they fall to the base of the cliff and take **20d6 bludgeoning damage**. A climber's kit will give them +2 to their rolls. A successful climb places the party at **The Gates of Quartztoil Tower**.
- The party can try to hike around the mountain using the various trails. After six hours of exploration, the party must succeed on a **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Wisdom (Survival) check** to find the correct path and avoid becoming lost. During the last hour of travel, the air gets very cold and begins to start freezing due to the elevation gain. Each party member must succeed on a **DC 8 Constitution saving throw** after one hour of exposure or suffer one level of exhaustion. Characters adapted to cold environments, resistant to cold damage, or wearing clothing specifically designed to keep out extreme cold do not have to make this saving throw. The hike places the party at **The Gates of Quartztoil Tower**.
- The party can explore the cave, leading to the discovery of **The Great Quartztoil Elevator**.

ARTIFICES
OF
QUARTZTOIL TOWER



THE GREAT QUARTZTOIL ELEVATOR

The walls of this cave are a mix of roughly-cut rock and worked, polished stone murals. In the center of the cave is a large, circular disk; an **elevating artifice** made by **Penaral Quartztoil**. The party can use this elevator to reach the **The Gates of Quartztoil Tower**.

Once the party reaches the Great Quartztoil Elevator, read the following:

The wide mouth of the cave leads to a long tunnel of worked stone, which suddenly opens out into a huge, domed chamber, lit by a pale, white glow emanating from sconces lining the walls. Their sickly light illuminates murals of gnomes working on constructs, similar to the ones terrorizing the town.

In the center of the chamber, among the scattered debris of rotted wooden crates, is a large circle of untarnished bronze. At each point of the compass around this disk is a pedestal and, in the ceiling, faintly illuminating it from far above, is a large, circular hole...

The party can determine the function of the device with a successful **DC 8 / 11 / 14 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **(Tinker's Tools)** check. This also reveals that the **North Pedestal** can make the device rise while the other pedestals maintain the speed, pitch, and yaw of the platform, but that these pedestals are inactive.

TREASURE

The rotted crates still contain some items that the Quartztoil gnomes were preparing to caravan out and goods they were trading for. The party easily find **Artisan's Tools: two sets of jeweler's tools** and a set of **tinker's tools**. They also find 100 lbs. copper bars worth **250 gp**.

While searching, a successful **DC 10 / 12 / 14 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals two copper flasks among the crates, one containing **oil of sharpness** and one containing a **potion of greater healing**.

THE ELEVATOR RIDE

Once the party activates the elevator by placing a palm on the **North Pedestal**, it begins to rise. After a few minutes into the ascent, the device will begin to malfunction; spinning, tilting, speeding up, and abruptly dropping only to stop and rise again. This will continue unless the party can stabilize the platform. The party must attempt to repair the **East Pedestal**, **South Pedestal**, and **West Pedestal** for the elevator to rise smoothly.

A party member attempting to move on the malfunctioning elevator must succeed on a **DC 12 / 16 / 20 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check or fall prone. A result of 5 or below will cause the party member to fall off of the elevator, taking a maximum of **20d6 bludgeoning damage** when they reach the bottom of the elevator shaft.

A party member can attempt to repair the **East**, **South**, and **West Pedestals** with a successful **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Intelligence (Thieves' Tools)** or **(Tinker's Tools)** check (a successful check is required for each pedestal). After three failed checks, the mechanism locks up and no further checks can be attempted; the elevator continues to malfunction for the remaining duration.

If the party successfully stabilizes the platform, the rest of the ride is uneventful, coming to a gentle stop in a stone barn-like building 100 yards from the tower (the old stables).

If the party fails and the device locks up, they still reach the old stables, but each character must make **DC 12 / 16 / 20 Constitution saving throw** or suffer one level of exhaustion and develop severe motion sickness (represented by the poisoned condition) for one hour.

THE GATES OF QUARTZTOIL TOWER

The exterior of the tower is actually quite pristine and looks as if it has been maintained and cared for over these past decades. The tower grounds are mostly rocky shale stone and decomposed granite trails, surrounded by a wrought iron fence atop a worked stone wall, radiating out from the tower over 100 yards in all directions.

Once the party reaches The Gates of Quartztoil Tower, read the following:

A great granite tower rises up at least 110 feet into the air. Chunks of quartz stone glisten in the light of an ethereal glow that seems to radiate from the tower walls itself, only to be reflected and refracted by the inlaid crystal. The top is rounded and covered with a white layer of snow, while midway up an observation deck can be seen overlooking the northern side.

A large set of gates meet a stone-paved road leading to a smaller building 100 yards away, dilapidated and forgotten. Half the roof is caved in, and snow covers the ruins of wagons and tack. The rough and rocky ground is icy and treacherous, scattered with decomposing crates that were never loaded, abandoned long before a job was finished.

You would be able to appreciate the beauty of the tower if it wasn't for the biting cold and cutting winds battering against you as you approach the massive steel gates barring the entrance to the interior.

The tower is located at high altitude and the area is very cold. There are no heat sources for the party other than those they bring with them. The structures block the biting wind but do nothing to make the cold more palatable. Each party member must succeed on a **DC 10 / 15 / 20 Constitution saving throw** after each hour of exposure, or suffer one level of exhaustion. Party members adapted to cold environments, resistant to cold damage, or wearing clothing specifically designed to keep out extreme cold do not have to make this saving throw.

If any party members succeed on a **DC 12 / 15 / 18 Wisdom (Perception)** check, they notice two figures moving slowly in a clockwise fashion on the observation deck.

If any party members succeed a **DC 15 / 18 / 21 Wisdom (Perception)** check, they notice the top of the tower is an opaque dome of a different material to the main structure.

If the party investigate the old building (or arrive there via the elevator), read the following:

The structure is built around a circular hole stretching down in a smooth shaft, seemingly into the depths of the mountain itself. The weight of decades of snow has partially collapsed the roof, and broken timbers, cracked leather packs, saddles, tack, and splintered wagons jut out of the rubble. Within the remains of one old cart lies the frozen, dessicated corpse of a gnome. In its skeletal hand, it clutches a locket, untouched by the frost.

The old stables are the final resting place of one of **Quartztoil's** workers, who attempted to make off with his **phylactery** in the early stages of his madness, but was killed by the collapsing roof. A successful **DC 12 / 16 / 20 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will detect powerful magic emanating from the locket. A **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Intelligence (Tinker's Tools)** check will reveal that it contains a complex system of gears, but is impossible to open.

When the party approaches the gates, read the following:

The 15 foot tall, steel gates rise imposingly in front of you, much larger than would be expected of a gnome structure. The exact reason for such a grand entry could only be guessed at, but it can be assumed that much bigger things than gnomes passed through here regularly.

The gates are locked and can only be opened by succeeding on a **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)** check to pick the lock or a **DC 20 / 22 / 24 Strength** check to break one side of the gate.

A low ramp at the base of the tower leads to a set of bronze double doors, engraved with gears and hammers, which open into the **Manufacturing Workshop**.

The party can attempt to scale the tower or fly to the top. Small windows barely larger than arrow slits provide light in the tower, but are not large enough for a Small creature to squeeze through.

Each party member must succeed on a **DC 15 / 20 / 25 Strength (Athletics)** check to safely scale the tower. Failure results in that party member dropping to the ground, taking **1d6 bludgeoning damage** for every 10 feet they fall for a maximum of **11d6**.

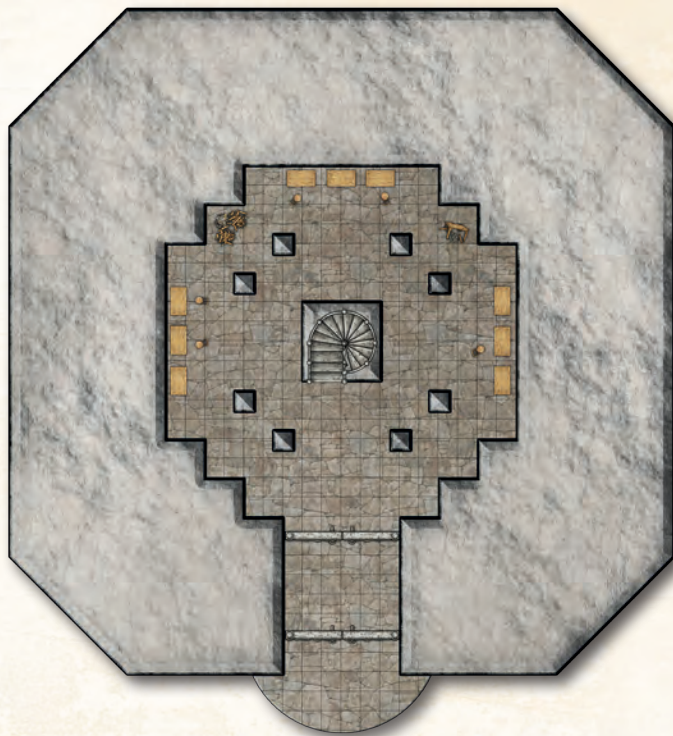
The top of the tower is impossible to access from outside due to the magical dome, but an intrepid party could reach and access the **Observation Deck**.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

If the party avoided the **Interested Party's** campsite earlier, then they now find them searching around the tower entrance. You can run a modified version of the initial meeting where **Garrin** will still try to hire the party. If the party avoids them again, they will set up camp near the front of the tower gates.

If the party becomes hostile towards them, the **Interested Party** will attempt to escape combat to observe from a safe distance, not wanting to expend resources before their exploration of the tower. The **Interested Party** will not engage the party again until the end of the adventure, and will spend their time preparing an ambush.

If the party chooses to work for **Garrin**, the **Interested Party** will move along behind the party as they explore the tower. Use 'The Interested Party' sidebar text to incorporate them into the exploration.



1. MANUFACTURING WORKSHOP

The party makes its way through two sets of double doors into a massive 90 foot wide base chamber. Throughout the chamber, small work stations and forges are set up. In each corner, there are large partially-completed constructs similar to the ones that have been terrorizing the local countryside.

When the party enters Quartztoil Tower, read the following:

The grating noise of the massive doors announces your presence as the light from outside pours into this great chamber. The tower's base seems to be a collection of several small workshops scattered with metallic hands and other extremities, while four unfinished constructs keep a slumped vigil on racks at each corner of the room. Small magical flames are set in sconces, lighting the dusty metal with a flickering glow. A great stone column is in the exact center of the chamber, and an old wooden staircase inside of it spirals upward to the next floor.

If the party approaches a construct, read:

With closer inspection, you can see that these contraptions are not truly full constructs. Metal seems to be bonded with bone, screws with old sinew. Plates and bolts have replaced some of the joints of the skeleton. The work is exceptional in its way, and it could be appreciated, with a sense of macabre, but this feeling is interrupted by the construct's sudden jerk into movement as it begins to attack.

4 incomplete Quartztoil constructs rise to attack the party. The fact that they are incomplete makes them no less dangerous and their unattached hand units, **4 crawling gauntlets** join the attack.

If the party fights the constructs or gets near the center column, read the following:

Suddenly, a small, raspy voice, amplified to great volume erupts throughout the tower. "There are no deliveries to be had today, only on the 5th and 20th of the month. This was the deal! Come no further, or be in breach of the contract! Much work to accomplish. Can't be distracted. Much work, yes?? Come back on the 20th or the 5th for deliveries..."

Once this event happens, The Tower, which contains a portion of **Quartztoil's** spirit, is aware of the presence of the party and its **legendary actions** become active.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Quartztoil Tower can take two legendary actions per round, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Quartztoil Tower regains spent legendary actions at the start of each round.

Disengage Minion. The tower momentarily assumes control of a friendly creature, granting it a tactical insight. One creature under **Quartztoil's** control takes the Disengage action and moves up to 10 feet.

Suppress Magic Item. Quartztoil's mastery over magical constructions allows him to dampen the effects of those that mean him harm. One creature must succeed on a **DC 12 / 14 / 16 Intelligence saving throw** or one magic item in its possession has its magic dispelled until the end of its next turn.

Shove. A wave of magical force assaults a creature. One creature must succeed on a **DC 12 / 14 / 16 Strength saving throw** or be pushed 10 feet in a direction of The Tower's choosing.

Trip. The floor roils and bucks, as if alive. One creature must make a **DC 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity saving throw**, or be knocked prone.

Use Objects. To express its displeasure, The Tower quakes and fits. All doors, lids, draws, etc. open or shut in one area. Small objects move around toward or away from the party. Harmful objects like traps are manually reset.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

After the battle, assuming the constructs have been slain, **Sala** will take an interest in their bodies and parts. She will pick at them and separate out the organic parts. If asked why she is doing it, she will rant about the dead needing a proper burial and how she will see it done. **Garrin** will command her to stop and she will solemnly follow her father's command.

If the party investigates the workshop, they find devices for smelting and refining metal. A successful **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Intelligence (Smith's Tools)** check will reveal the forge can reach far hotter temperatures than is usual, enabling the creation of superior strength metal alloys.

These forges are the only thing hot enough to destroy the **phylactery** located in the old stables (in **The Gates of Quartztoil Tower**).



2. LIVING QUARTERS

This area used to be where the Quartztoil gnomes lived when they weren't working. It's separated into several small dorm rooms and a common area, with dining and kitchen facilities.

When the party enters the living quarters, read the following:

Once, this was a bustling area where the gnomes of the tower would eat, drink, and revel after a long, hard days' work. Now cobwebs, mold, broken furniture, and dusty reminders of a time long past haunt this place.

This area is mostly empty of any real valuables, but there are several **cold weather outfits** that can fit a Small character. These outfits cannot fit Medium creatures, though several blankets and furs can be gathered to bind together a makeshift outfit which will give a creature advantage on checks to endure cold weather conditions.

Heavy double doors on the east and west side of the tower reveal stairways which lead up to the **Observation Deck**, while a spiral staircase in the center of the tower leads down to the **Manufacturing Workshop**. By now the party would have noticed that the doors and stairs of this tower are not proportionately appropriate for gnomes. They were designed for much larger creatures.

TREASURE

In one of the rooms, a **chest** is hidden under one of the beds. The chest is guarded by a **crossbow trap** which is activated if the chest is moved and the wire activating the trap is not disarmed. The wire can be detected with a successful **DC 15 / 20 / 25 Intelligence (Investigation)** check.

When activated, the trap fires **4 bolts**. The trap makes four ranged attacks against the triggering creature. Each attack has a **+8 attack bonus** and deals **3 (1d6) piercing damage**. These are **dragontooth bolts** (see **Appendix D**) and cause extra damage if not removed properly.

A **DC 10 / 15 / 20 Dexterity (Thieve's Tools)** check disables the trap, but a check result of 5 or less triggers the trap.

The chest was owned by a gnomish worker, **Allia Rootbootle**, who ran a gambling gig on the side to supplement her income, fleecing her fellow workers with a stacked deck of cards. The chest is locked and may only be opened by succeeding on a **DC 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)** check. The chest contains coins (2 pp, 135 gp, 230 sp, 16 ep, 376 cp), a small pouch containing 5 rubies (50 gp each), a set of marked playing cards, 6 dragontooth bolts (see Appendix D), and a note (see Appendix E) written in gnomish about how her 'debt is about ready to be repaid' and she 'can't wait to get back home'.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

While exploring, **Mara** and **Grankus** will take anything left behind by the party if they leave the area, including **Allia Rootbootle's stash**. **Grankus** is especially skilled at looting quickly.

3. OBSERVATION DECK

This deck sits 60 feet up from the base of the tower and overlooks the surrounding mountain ranges.

When the party ascends to the observation deck, read the following:

The freezing air assaults you as you walk onto the tower's observation deck. Its low stone walls are fit to protect a Small creature from the dizzying drop to the rocks far below, but less so someone of human height. Two figures, like sentries, move slowly in a clockwise fashion around the tower. They look out over the surrounding mountainside in a state of constant vigil, stopping at the northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest in a half turret shaped section of the observation deck.

Patrolling the Observation Deck, 2 **ghastructs**, smaller constructs containing more organic material, watch for intruders and will begin attacking the party if they are detected. They are constantly on lookout but no longer have anyone to report to, so they continue to follow the last order they received. Because they are actively observing, they have an active +8 bonus to their **Perception** skill and have advantage when observing anything approaching.

If the party fights the **ghastructs**, they will attempt to paralyze as many of the party members as possible while The Tower's **legendary action** tries to push them off the ledge. The fall from the deck is a 60 foot drop and deals **6d6 bludgeoning damage**. A party member may attempt a **DC 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity saving throw** to catch themselves on the low stone wall, if they are not paralyzed.

TREASURE

The **ghastructs'** faces have been fitted with *eyes of the eagle*. They are grafted to the constructs and a successful **DC 15 / 20 / 25 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools)** or **(Tinker's Tools)** check is required to remove them. If removed without finesse, through physical or magical force, then the frames bend and the lenses crack, rendering them useless.

When the party reaches the north end of the observation deck, read the following:

A pair of heavy stone doors decorated with metal plating face north and lead to an inner portion of the tower. They are decorated with embossed figures in full armor.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

After the **ghastruct** threat has been removed, **Kra** will kneel down and begin a small ritual to her deity that takes a minute. If the party waits within the area while **Kra** performs the ritual, they will have advantage on the next **initiative check** they make against the creatures in the tower. Conversely, they will have disadvantage on initiative checks made against the **Interested Party** if they engage them in combat in the next 24 hours.

4. QUARTZTOIL'S LABORATORY

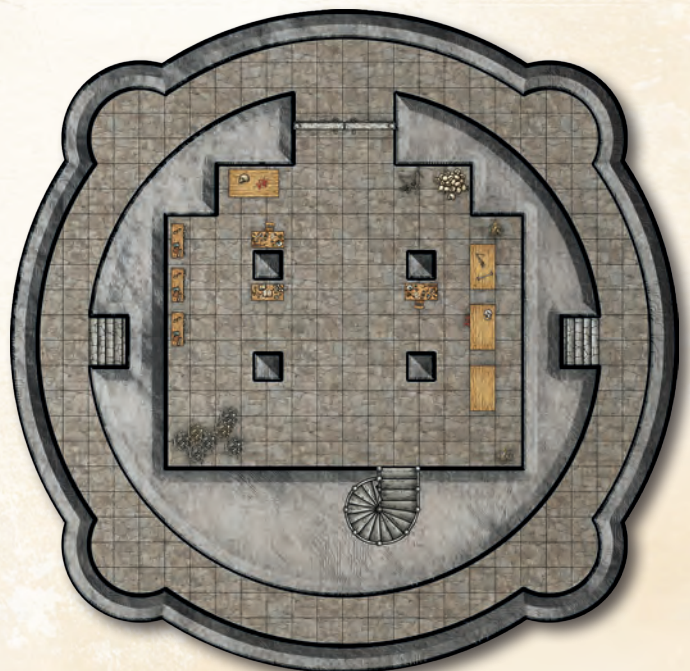
When the party enters Quartztoil's Laboratory, read the following:

This laboratory contains several workstations scattered about the room, each with tools that indicate that it was originally tailored towards an individual artisan craft. Other parts of the lab reveal a more nefarious side of this workshop, with bones, skin, fur and blood in labeled bins, indicating that bodies have been methodically taken apart. Skulls and limbs that have been bonded to freshly smelted iron, or bolted with steel plates, dominate each work station. These displays prove the vile methods to which the Quartztoil gnomes must have resorted to make their constructs function. At each station, several armored humanoids work away non-stop.

5 **animated armors** are working at the stations and continue to do so unless they are disturbed. They also will attack if the party is seen walking up the stairs to **Quartztoil's Library**.

If the party kills and examines one or more of the armors, read the following:

The face plate of the armor falls off, revealing the skull of a dead gnome. Unlike the other constructs, this skeleton does not seem to be bonded to the armor, but was simply stuffed inside.



TREASURE

A multitude of scattered notes and blueprints can be found in this area. If the GM is using **Hook #1**, these notes are what **Gritz** is looking for, and taking these back to him will be enough to gain the promised reward.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

After the **animated armors** have been defeated, **Sala** and **Mara** will go through the contents of the lab. They will be able to scrounge up a few bottles of acid and poison, respectively, to replenish their supplies.

5. QUARTZTOIL'S LIBRARY

When the party enters Quartztoil's Library, read the following:

Shelves of books dotted with artifacts, tools, and contraptions line the walls of this enormous room. In the center, there is a small desk flanked by two rows of bookcases. A humanoid figure in a suit of armor, thumbs through a book with one hand and is writing with the other. Without stopping, it glances up towards you and, again, a small, but incongruously loud, voice erupts throughout the tower.

"Again, you insist on disturbing my work. Can you not see I am busy? Business should be conducted on the 17th and 1st as per our agreement. Now that you are here, however, I will take the 237 sapphires I was promised, along with some of that delicious goat jerky you brought the last time."

The armor, still writing, silently stares at you with unseen eyes...

Although the voice emanates from the walls of the tower itself, the **animated armor** behind the desk will move and emote as if it is speaking. The party might ask questions similar to the following:

• **Who are you?** "Why, I am Penaral Quartztoil! You should know that, because we signed the contract. Did you find the eight spotted cats hard to procure?!"

• **Why are you attacking villages with your constructs?** "You have an odd way of describing my diplomatic trade caravans, you silly dragon. That reminds me, I could use five pints of goblin fat with my next order! You can get that, right?"

• **What you are doing is wrong! Why are you infusing the undead with your constructs?** "Ah, the old methods of constructing golems is really rather outdated. You see, the only really efficient way is to bond a body with necrotic energies. It is the future of construct technology, every artificer worth his alchemical burner knows that. You are getting a far superior product, produced faster, produced better, and produced cheaper than anywhere else in the land. I dance the waltz with each and every one of them after they are assembled."

• **What happened to you?** "I got the craving for squaring the circle on my business model. Quartztoil constructs need to be in every home. Magic-magic-magic! It makes the world go round! Magic-magic-magic! Don't you love my sound! Magic-ma-where was I again?"

• **Are you crazy?** "Yes... Genius is crazy. But also, yes. Hee! Hee!"

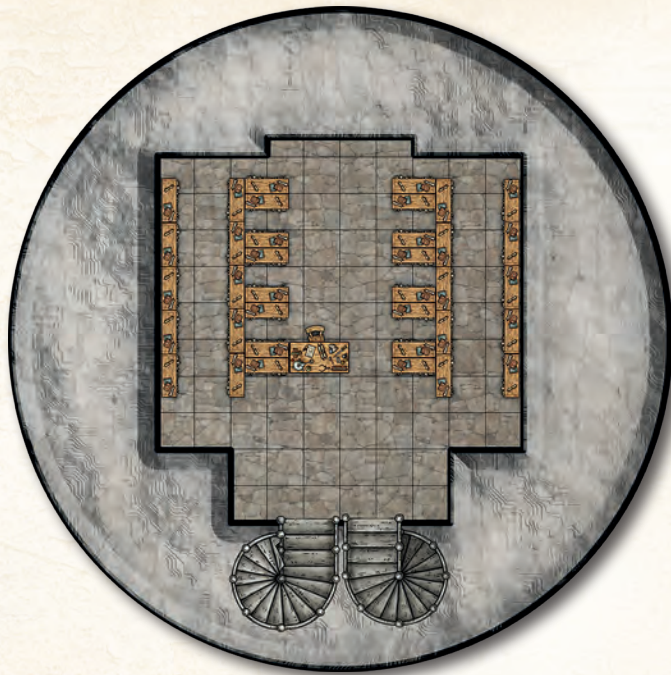
• **Can you please stop sending your constructs?** "I like wolf puppies, but stopping deliveries would be a breach of contract. The contract is the law that we gnomes live by, along with always taking time to smell the alchemical flasks after brewing up some sulfur."

• **Don't you know you are destroying towns?** "That is a tried and true method on how to effectively advertise your products. Word of mouth is never enough. Effective demonstration and handing out samples of 7-day-old mountain oysters is the only way to advertise."

• **What are you working on?** "This is my current plan, along with schematics to encase my body in my lich golem vessel instead of being bound to this tower. Once I am out, I can go ahead and fuse every living creature I find into a shiny undead construct under my control, so none will question the efficacy of my model. I am also trying to perfect my pig-cheese soufflé recipe. It is absolutely delicious."

• **We have to stop you!** "No refunds! No exchanges! No sock puppets!"





Once the party has had enough time to speak with **Penaral Quartztoil**, the **animated armor** will attack the party. The **armor** will adopt the **Penaral possessed template** when attacking.

If the party kills the Penaral animated armor, read the following:

The construct drops to the ground and the armor plates dislodge and scatter around the body of a female gnome. She suddenly gasps in a deep breath as if she has come up for air after a deep dive in freezing water, wildly looking around, scared and confused. She then starts crying out, "Don't let them get me! Don't let them take me!"

The small hysterical gnome is **Allia Rootbootle**, and the last thing she remembers is being grabbed by **Quartztoil's** golems and being forced into the armor laying around her. She explains that Quartztoil has become crazed over the last few months (she has no idea that she has been trapped inside the armor 90 years) and that the other gnomes were talking about leaving due to the rumors he was using necromancy to build his constructs. Other than that, she feigns ignorance, and plays up being traumatized more than she is, looking for a chance to run and get away from Quartztoil Tower as fast as possible.

If the party search the bookshelves, read the following:

There are books on various subjects, but the majority are about tinkering and metalworking techniques, with a few about the basics of infusing material with magic to create simple constructs (some of which are scribbled over with notes decrying their uselessness and inefficiencies).

TREASURE

The library itself is a treasure. The collection is **4 tons of books** that would be a boon to any mage's library. A party member who has access to this library can spend their downtime training without having to spend 1 gp a day or finding a trainer to **learn a new language** or **proficiency with a new tool**.

If a party member succeeds on a **DC 15 / 20 / 25 Intelligence (Investigation)** check, they find a spell book, the **Artificer's Book of Minor Infusions** (see **Appendix D**).

THE INTERESTED PARTY

If the party made the deal with **Garrin**, this is the treasure he seeks. If the party secures the room and goes back to inform **Garrin**, he will rush upstairs to the library without delay. He will start searching for the **Artificer's Book of Minor Infusions** while the rest of the **Interested Party** starts gathering up the books from the shelves. **Garrin** will only pay the party when the book is found. **Garrin** doesn't care about the rest of Quartztoil Tower beyond the library.

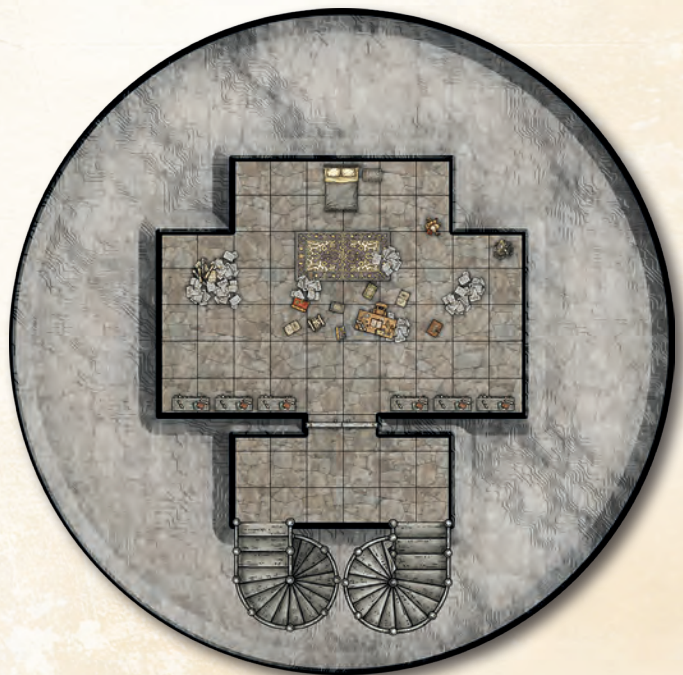
6. PENARAL'S PRIVATE QUARTERS

The spiral staircase from the library ends at a large room. On the North wall is a large locked double door which leads to Penaral Quartztoil's Private Quarters. The lock can be picked with thief's tools and a successful **DC 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity** check. To the east is another spiral staircase that leads upward.

When the party enters Quartztoil's Private Quarters, read the following:

This room is fairly dusty and hasn't been cleaned in years. A dilapidated bed, dresser, wardrobe, and desk sit unused and gathering cobwebs. Around the room, you can see pages of parchment pinned to the walls, and vellum design schematics litter the floor with no sense of order to their arrangement. With a quick glance, the designs refer to the constructs and necromantic experiments.

Suddenly, the small, but incongruously loud, voice erupts throughout the tower, yet again. "No! No! No! Yes! No! Deliveries are accepted and signed for on the ground floor, not on the top! You could not have messed up the procedure worse! No griffin stew for you!"



This bedroom and office is littered with notes and designs that led **Quartztoil** to his madness. As the artificer drove deeper and deeper into combining the necromantic arts with the construction of golems, he went insane. Eventually this led him to attempt the experiment on himself, in which he hoped to become a lich inside a golem body. This, however, went awry, and now his soul is trapped within the tower and has only been able to interact with the constructs within. The notes indicate that he needed to procure a 'modified workforce' by bonding the gnomes working in the tower into construct shells. The bustle of activity can be heard coming from outside and above, where his 'workforce' are working to achieve his perverse dream of a **lich-golem** on the **Quartztoil Tower Roof**.

A successful **DC 10 / 12 / 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check** infers from the notes and designs that stopping Penaral requires prying open the golem body and crushing the undead gnome's withered heart within, destroying his hold over Quartztoil Tower.

A **locked safe** is hidden behind a painting of a gnome in leather armor holding various artificer's tools on the wall, which requires a successful **DC 15 / 20 / 25 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check** to open. The safe contains **Penaral's spellbook** (see **Appendix D**).

THE INTERESTED PARTY

Mara and **Grankus** will not be content loitering in the library. They will wait for the party to leave then loot the private quarters, taking **Penaral's Spellbook** if the party has not already done so.

7. QUARTZTOIL TOWER ROOF

The roof of the tower is surrounded by a snow-covered, domed wall of opaque magical force which protects the inside from the elements. 12 alcoves have been cut into the wall with **12 suits of animated armor** standing within. There are also **3 animated armor** suits which are tinkering with a massive steel component that could be attached to a huge golem.

When the party enters onto the Quartztoil Tower Roof, read the following:

As the you enter the area of the roof, you notice no biting wind, though the area is still freezing. Snow drifts and falls onto a ceiling of invisible force which is fogged with condensation and frost, and coated outside with a layer of ice.

Around the rooftop, three constructs work on assembling parts of, what appears to be, an enormous metal arm, while against the tower wall, more constructs stand like soldiers at attention awaiting orders. To the north two ladders stand on either side of the pinnacle of Quartztoil Tower, a platform where a huge golem slumps, unfinished.

Once again, the small, but incongruously loud, voice erupts throughout the tower. "This is an insult that cannot be overlooked. You are not simple traders, interested in my wares and goods and superior hygiene, you are nothing more than thieves set on stealing my greatest secrets and my immortality. You shall not have them!"

The **wall of force** dome becomes inactive, to allow the tower to use its **legendary actions** to attempt to push characters off the top of the tower. The fall from the top is a **100 foot drop**, and deals **10d6 bludgeoning damage** on impact. A party member may attempt a **DC 14 / 18 / 22 Dexterity saving throw** to catch themselves on the railing.

While the **withered lich** is active, The Tower has the following additional **legendary action** available to it:

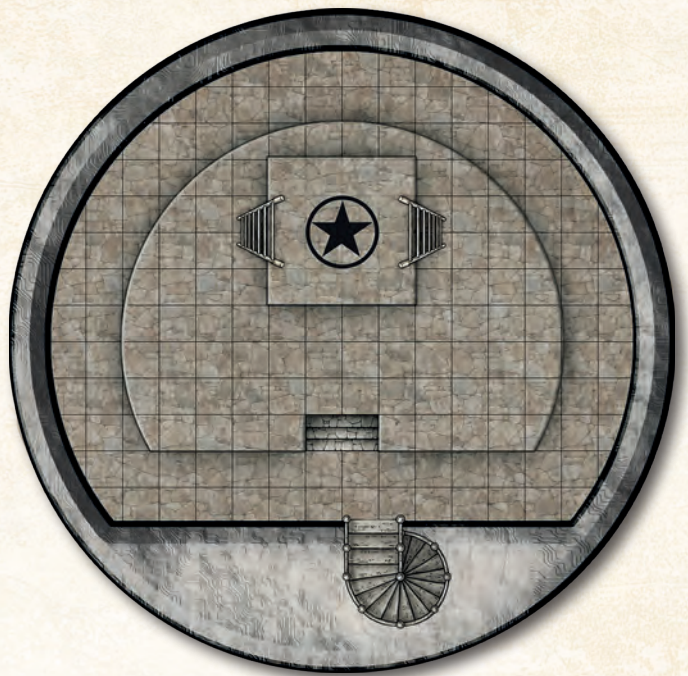
Smash. The unfinished **lich-golem** slams down with its completed arm. One creature within 10 feet of the lich-golem must succeed on a **DC 14 / 16 / 18 Dexterity saving throw** or take **2d10 + 4 / 4d10 + 5 / 6d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage**.

On the first round of combat, read:

All of a sudden, a burst of wind and snow whip around you as the protective dome vanishes in an instant and exposes the tower's roof to the elements.

The **3 animated armors** will cease their tinkering and begin attacking the party, while one **animated armor** on the wall will activate and adopt the **Penaral possessed template**. If one of the **animated armors** is killed, one of the remaining inactive **animated armors** will activate. Additionally, if one of the inactive **animated armors** is attacked then it will **activate**, increasing the number of enemies the party must face.

A successful **DC 10 / 13 / 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** causes the party to notice that the **animated armors'** primary goal is to keep the party away from the **lich-golem** at the top of the tower.



The **animated armors** contain the gnomes from the tower that have been trapped in these constructs for the past 90 years. If the party does not choose to knock an animated armor out rather than kill it, the gnome inside dies when the animated armor is killed.

If the party kills an animated armor, read the following:

A small cry is heard through the inside of the armor as the construct falls to the ground, and a pool of blood soaks the snow around it.

The **lich-golem** construct at the top is incomplete and months away from becoming fully operational. A party member can attempt to reach the **lich-golem** and destroy **Penaral's Heart** to stop the constructs. The **golem** must be attacked in three stages: **outer plates**, **inner workings**, and **Penaral's body**.

- **Outer plates.** A party member can pry open the outer plates of the **lich-golem** with a successful **DC 15 / 20 / 25 Strength check** or make an attack against them. The outer plates have an **AC of 19, 35 hit points**, and are resistant to piercing and slashing damage from non-magical weapons.

- **Inner workings.** A party member must spend an action to try to cut, pry, or break away the gears, springs, cogs, and wires that make up the inner workings of the **lich-golem** with successful **DC 13 / 18 / 22 Strength check** or make an attack against

them. The inner workings have an **AC of 16, 20 hit points**, and are resistant to piercing and slashing damage from non-magical weapons.

- **Penaral's body.** This small, shriveled, undead gnome screeches as the light hits its eyes that have only known darkness for many decades. **Penaral's body** will immediately animate as a **withered lich**. The **withered lich** will only have the spell slots the **Penaral possessed template** has not expended. Once the **withered lich** is reduced to 0 hit points, a party member must take an action to **destroy his heart**. Once the heart is destroyed, all **constructs** drop and stop functioning, releasing the trapped gnomes inside. The Tower ceases to perform legendary actions.

After defeating the withered lich, read the following:

A great wailing cry erupts from the tower itself so loud that it echoes for miles. The entire structure shifts and quakes, as if experiencing its own death throes. Loose items scatter across the floors, books fall from shelves, and unattended glass vials shatter throughout the tower. Suits of armor open up with a clatter and a cloud of dust, releasing confused gnomes that have not seen the light of day for over 90 years. After this cascade of events happens, one final scream erupts from the walls and the tower falls silent. Magical lights throughout the structure extinguish and the tower falls dark. Quartztoil Tower is free of Penaral's influence.



THE INTERESTED PARTY

If the party has been friendly with the **Interested Party**, then **Sala** and **Kra** will join the fight in the 2nd round of combat. **Mara** and **Grankus** will show up on the 5th round of combat. **Garrin** himself will show no interest in the party's actions after obtaining access to the library.

If the party has avoided dealing with, been hostile to, or betrayed the **Interested Party**, then they will be waiting to ambush them:

- The Interested party has stealth options, magic spells and items that can help to make a great trap for the party as they exit through **Quartztoil's Library**.
- The **Manufacturing Workshop** is a great ambush spot where **Mara**, **Kra**, and **Garrin** can attack from range while **Grankus** and **Sala** engage in melee.
- **Grankus** can sabotage the **elevator** to crash while the rest of the **Interested Party** waits in the **cave containing The Great Quartztoil Elevator** to attack any who survive in the wreckage.

Garrin will demand the **Artificer's Book of Minor Infusions** from the party in the first round of the ambush. If he receives it, he will not attack the party further but, if not, will have his **allies** fight to the death to get what he wants, even his own **daughter**. **Garrin** will not fight to the death, however, and will make every attempt to escape if this goes badly, plotting revenge while he licks his wounds.

CONCLUSION

If the **gnomes** trapped in the **constructs** survived, the party can determine how to deal with them. The gnomes ask to accompany them back to the village so they can get supplies and try to come to terms of losing 90 years of their lives. **Allia Rootbootle** will subtly ask about anything left in the living quarters; she is hinting about her personal affects and ill-gotten wealth, but will not press the issue, as she is grateful not to be trapped in a construct shell any longer.

The party is now free to go back to town and collect their **reward**. The townsfolk are grateful that rampaging golems will no longer threaten their livelihoods and property, and welcome the party to take up residence in the tower (none of them are in any hurry to lay claim to the source of their woes); it is a very secure and out-of-the-way location to rest and plan out their future adventures. A great celebration is planned in the party's honor, during which the confused gnomes can be brought up to speed on current events.

If any of the **Interested Party** survived but were, in any way, cheated or attacked, the remaining members will seek out the party when they are vulnerable (most likely when they are sleeping). The GM is encouraged to use all the **Interested Party's**

talents to attack characters individually and when they are weakest; **Garrin** is a petty, angry individual who holds a grudge, and may hire additional muscle to carry out his revenge if the **Interested Party** was depleted, possibly waiting and nursing his ill-will for months, or even years, if needs be.

If the **phylactery** was found but not destroyed, it begins to tick, building slowly in speed until **Penaral Quartztoil** is reborn as a **withered lich** after **1d10 days**. If possible, he will attack the party the night of the celebration, using *invisibility* to approach on a rooftop and begin his attack by using *fireball* to cow the townsfolk then attack the party with higher level spells, before returning to his tower to attempt to restart his work (which he will find difficult without his workforce).

If the party followed any of the adventure hooks, they can collect on what is owed to them:

Hook #1- Gritz Garick is ecstatic to gain the notes on the constructs, and also slightly disturbed and disappointed to find how Quartztoil 'cheated' by using necromancy. Regardless, he finds many useful notes on the construct portion of the research and pays the party their promised reward for the notes. Of course, now **Gritz** has the knowledge, will the temptation to use it ever become too much for him to bear?

Hook #2- The party member who was interested in crafting and/or magic items finds the tower is abundant with notes and books on artifices and arcana. The party member discovers several formulae for magic items. All **common magic item** formulae are available, as well as **five uncommon**, **two rare**, and **one very rare magic item** formula, discovered among Quartztoil's notes and books (the GM ultimately determines what those items are). These specific items can be crafted in the tower 50% faster due to the specialized equipment within, but the party member must still provide the materials and cost to create the items (at the GM's determination).

Hook #3- The party returns to **Odalleron Val'Thalis**, who is still recovering from his wounds, and reports their discovery of the tower. The **mage** is insistent that they immediately destroy the hard, metal **phylactery** as soon as possible. **Odalleron** is also keen to go back to the tower to work on cataloging and keeping the arcane works of Quartztoil Tower from reaching 'the wrong people'. This can play out in several different ways depending how the party left the tower (for example, using it as a new stronghold for themselves, giving it back to the gnomes, or possibly destroying it). Whatever the case, the party have made an ally in **Odalleron Val'Thalis**, and they can expect him to be very friendly and amenable to any request for help they make of him.

APPENDIX A: BEGINNER MONSTERS

ANIMATED ARMOR

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 31 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (–5)	3 (–4)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The animated armor is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the animated armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While the animated armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The animated armor makes two melee attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

PENARAL POSSESSED TEMPLATE

A construct can become a vessel for **Penaral Quartztoil** to inhabit. It keeps its statistics, with the following amendments:

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Speed. The Penaral Possessed gains a flying speed of 30 feet

Ability Scores. The Penaral Possessed has the following new ability scores: **INT** 18 (+4), **WIS** 14 (+2), **CHA** 12 (+1)

Skills. The Penaral Possessed gains proficiency in Arcana (+6), History (+6), Religion (+6)

Languages. The Penaral Possessed speaks Gnomish and Goblin

Spellcasting. The Penaral Possessed is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The Penaral Possessed has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mending, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, misty step*

3rd level (2 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

CRAWLING GAUNTLET

Tiny construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d4 + 2)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	5 (–3)	10 (+0)	4 (–3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (25 XP)

Immutable Form. The crawling gauntlet is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The crawling gauntlet has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The crawling gauntlet's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The crawling gauntlet cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Gauntlet. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 11) until the grapple ends. The crawling gauntlet can only grapple one target.

GHASTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d10 + 8)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Immutable Form. The ghastruct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The ghastruct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The ghastruct's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The ghastruct cannot be turned.

Siege Monster. The ghastruct deals double damage to objects and structures.

Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the ghastruct must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghastruct's stench for 24 hours.

ACTIONS

Steel Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature and not undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, end the effect on itself on a success.

INCOMPLETE QUARTZTOIL CONSTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d10 + 6)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+1)	12 (+1)	6 (–2)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Damage Resistance necrotic

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Immutable Form. The incomplete Quartztoil construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Weapons. The incomplete Quartztoil construct's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Resistance. The incomplete Quartztoil construct has advantage on any saving throws against any effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Death Seep. Unbound, raw, necrotic energy pours out from the construct. Each creature within 5 feet of the Incomplete Quartztoil Construct must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 5 (2d4) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.



QUARTZTOIL CONSTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (6d10 + 12)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (–2)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Immutable Form. The Quartztoil construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The Quartztoil construct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Quartztoil construct's weapon attacks are magical.

Siege Monster. The Quartztoil construct deals double damage to objects and structures.

Turn Immunity. The Quartztoil construct cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.



WITHERED LICH

Small undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 18 (5d6)

Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (–4)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +2, Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +8, History +6, Insight +4, Perception +4, Religion +6

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Gnomish, Goblin

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Rejuvenation. If the withered lich's heart is not crushed, a destroyed withered lich reassembles its body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again.

Spellcasting. The withered lich is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The withered lich has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mending, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, misty step*

3rd level (2 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

Turn Resistance. The withered lich has advantage on any saving throws against any effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Freezing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) cold damage. The target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 5 (2d4) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

GARRIN ASHCOPSE

Small humanoid (lightfoot halfling), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)

Hit Points 27 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wisdom +3, Charisma +6

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +6, Religion +4, Stealth +2

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Agonizing Blast. Garrin adds +4 damage to his *eldrich blast* spells on a hit.

Brave. Garrin has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Criminal Contact. Garrin has a contact in the criminal network, and can send and receive messages to them through various means, even over great distances.

Dark One's Blessing. When Garrin reduces a hostile creature to 0 hit points, he gains 8 temporary hit points.

Eyes of the Rune Keeper. Garrin can read all writing.

Halfling Nimbleness. Garrin can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than him.

Lucky. When Garrin rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Naturally Stealthy. Garrin can attempt to hide even when he is obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than him.

Pact Magic. Garrin is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He regains expended spell slots after a short or long rest, and knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips: *blade ward*, *eldrich blast*, *poison spray*

2nd level (2 slots): *burning hands*, *command*, *hellish rebuke*, *protection from evil and good*, *scorching ray*.

Pact of the Blade (Flail). Garrin can use his action to create a pact weapon in a free hand. He is proficient with the weapon and it counts as magical for the purposes of overcoming resistances and immunities. The weapon disappears if it is more than 5 ft. away from Garrin for more than one minute, if he dies or if he dismisses it (no action required).

ACTIONS

Dagger *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Pact Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5ft, one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage .

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Ragged fine clothes, studded leather, *orb of The Voice*, dagger, Dragonchess, lock of hair, thieves' tools, 10gp

Garrin Ashcops was a devoted husband to his wife Filna, and a loving father to their six children. That man has not been seen since Filna's death giving birth to their seventh. Unable to come to terms with her loss, Garrin disappeared for years and returned... changed.

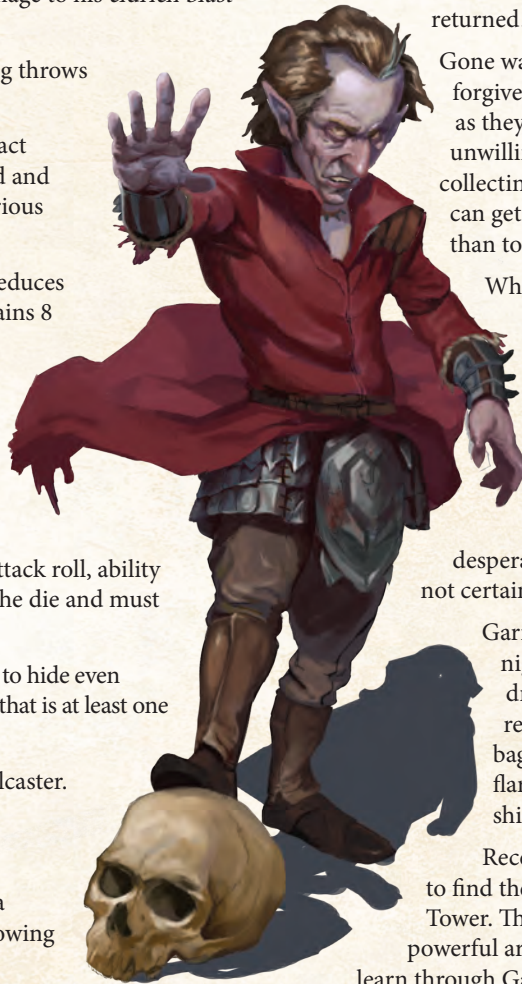
Gone was any warmth in the man, any humor or forgiveness. His children mourned his loss, even as they feared what he had become. They are now unwilling pawns in Garrin's criminal enterprise, collecting for him any items of magical power they can get their hands on to an end they know better than to ask about.

What they do not know is that Garrin is little more than a pawn himself, a puppet dancing to the whims of The Voice; a demonic maelstrom of threats, mocking laughter and half-remembered promises plaguing Garrin's psyche. What is left of Garrin is almost certain The Voice is lying when it claims the items are for a device to return Filna from the dead but, for a man as desperate and broken as Garrin, 'almost certain' is not certain enough.

Garrin has the face of a man who sees nightmares on a regular basis. His weight has dropped quickly and he appears sunken as a result. His eyes are surrounded by deep grey bags and rimmed with red. When his anger flares, it might be possible to notice his eyes shift to a fiery hue.

Recently, The Voice has been leading Garrin to find the texts and research housed in Quartztoil Tower. The binding of undead to constructs is a powerful artifice, and one The Voice is determined to learn through Garrin (with promises that such secrets may see his wife returned to him).

To his credit, Garrin will keep his word with the party if he is able to lay claim to the library and the research within, including the *Artificer's Book of Minor Infusions*. If the party attempts to block him from this knowledge then he will be visibly furious, but tell the party through gritted teeth that he understands why they can't keep their part of the deal. His revenge for their transgression is inevitable but, if needed, may be delayed while he gathers additional strength; if nothing else, Garrin can nurse a grudge.



GRANKUS FELDSPURN

Medium humanoid (half-orc), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+0)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dexterity +5, Intelligence +4

Skills Acrobatics +5, Perception +2, Slight of Hand +5, Stealth +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11,

Languages Common, Orc, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Grankus can deal an extra 1d6 damage to one creature he hits with an attack if he has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or ranged weapon. He doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Binding Contract. Grankus has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Cunning Action. On his turn, as a bonus action, Grankus can take the Dash, Dodge, Disengage, or Hide action.

Relentless Endurance (1/day). When Grankus is reduced to 0 hit points, but not killed outright, he can drop to 1 hit point instead.

Savage Attacks. When Grankus scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, shortsword, four handaxes, thieves' tools, burglar's pack, *potion of healing*, 25 gp

Grankus has been a thief and burglar since birth. It was told to him that his mother used to latch him to her back as she broke into homes and stores. He grew up stealing and continued the family tradition. He is as proud of what he does as any craftsman is proud of their skill. Now, at 30 years old, he has begun setting his sights on bigger and better targets to mark, looking to test himself against them.

This brazen attitude led him to the home of Garrin Ashcopse, where he attempted to make off with substantial amounts of magical loot. The warlock and his children caught Grankus in the act and subdued him. The thief found himself in a losing situation, but a normally-angry Garrin was passive and calm when confronting the half-orc, simply explaining that he needed someone with his type of specialist skills for several jobs in the foreseeable future. Garrin required Grankus' services for one year and, with that, he traded coin (and allowed the half-orc to keep his life) to procure them.

Grankus is in a binding contract working for Garrin Ashcopse and, thus, The Voice, though he is unaware of that otherworldly influence. He has an uneasy, unnatural, and unknown compulsion to obey Garrin when it comes to the terms of his employment. Grankus is three months away from the contract's end and is eager to be free from Garrin once it is over.



MARA SAGEPREL

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Dexterity +6, Intelligence +3

Skills Acrobatics +6, Deception +4, Perception +3, Persuasion +4, Sleight of Hand +6, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Halfling, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Mara can deal an extra 1d6 damage to one creature she hits with an attack if she has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or ranged weapon. She doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Binding Contract. Mara has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Escape Artist. Mara leaves no trace. Anyone attempting to track her has disadvantage.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Poison Use. Mara applies a basic poison to her weapon or up to three pieces of ammunition. A creature hit by the poisoned weapon or ammunition must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1d4 poison damage. Mara's poisons, once applied, lose their potency after one hour.

REACTIONS

Parry. When Mara is hit with a melee attack while wielding a melee weapon with the finesse property, she can add +2 to her AC for that attack.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, dagger, shortbow, 20 arrows, explorer's pack, poisoner's kit, 5 bottles of basic poison, 30 gp

Mara Sageprel led a charmed life, the daughter of a wealthy merchant in a safe and prosperous town, for twenty years. In her hometown, her family had influence but, after the town was besieged by a hobgoblin battalion, that all changed. Her family was killed, her estate burned to the ground, and her father's stores were razed. Mara survived by hiding, but her world was shattered.

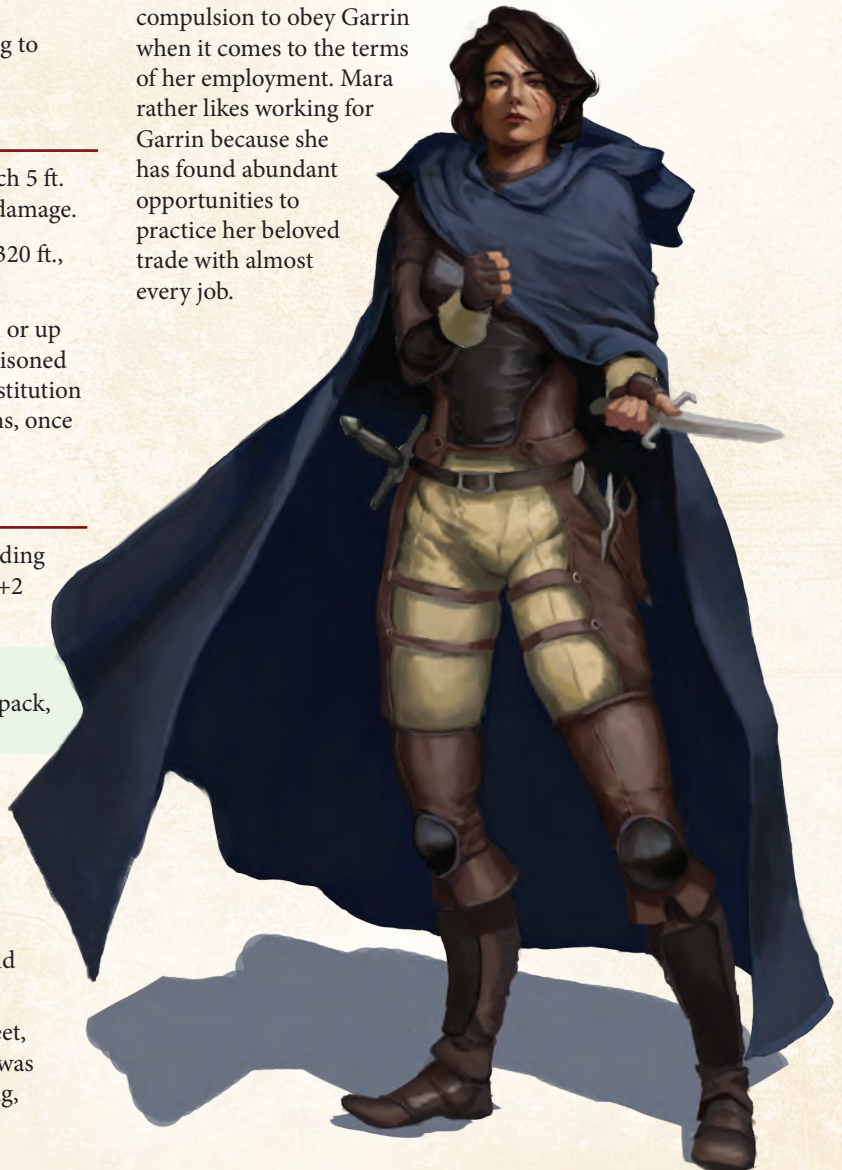
In a neighboring city, after days of walking on delicate feet, she tried to find help, but found none to be offered. She was forced to the streets, but refused to be reduced to begging,

instead taking up a life of petty crime. One day, Mara was caught stealing from a merchant's cart and chased into a back alley. The merchant beat her soundly for the theft but, when he turned his back to leave her in a crumpled heap, she was able to gather the strength for the final word, and slashed the merchant's throat with her knife. At that moment, she discovered a taste for the rush of power that comes from taking the life of another.

Mara began to practice and perfect her new art by targeting the beggars and homeless of the city that none would miss. This cleansing caught the eye of the local assassins guild after Mara had dispatched one of their beggar informants. Instead of exacting revenge upon Mara, they took her in and nurtured her talents. By her 25th birthday, Mara had become a proficient poisoner, skilled infiltrator, and efficient killer.

When on the job, Mara will prepare at least three arrows or her melee weapon with poison if she expects combat within the next hour. She is equally inclined to attack at range or to get up-close and personal with her unfortunate victims.

Mara is also in a binding contract working for Garrin Ashcopse and, thus, The Voice, though she is similarly unaware of that otherworldly influence. Like Grankus, she too has an uneasy, unnatural, and unknown compulsion to obey Garrin when it comes to the terms of her employment. Mara rather likes working for Garrin because she has found abundant opportunities to practice her beloved trade with almost every job.



SALA ASHCOPSE

Small humanoid (lightfoot halfling), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	9 (−1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Strength +3, Dexterity +5

Skills Athletics +3, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Brave. Sala has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Bond of Blood (1/day). When Sala is reduced to 0 hit points, she grants her father, Garrin Ashcopse, an additional warlock spell slot that must be used within one minute.

Halfling Nimbleness. Sala can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than her.

Lucky. When Sala rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, she can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Naturally Stealthy. Sala can attempt to hide even when she is obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than her.

Pack Tactics. Sala has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Sala's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Acid. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 5/20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) acid damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, rapier, ten darts, four acid vials, dungeoneer's pack, 15 gp

Sala is the eldest daughter of Garrin Ashcopse. The years since her mother died and her father returned have taken their toll on her sanity on two fronts; one being Garrin's abusive personality and demeanor, the second her constant close proximity to The Voice, the entity that plagues her father, and reaches out to touch those closest to him. These factors have driven her to the point of a madness akin to her father's; she has become sadistic towards her enemies and masochistic to herself.

Sala enjoys tracing runes and symbols onto her skin with acid, which has produced intricate scars all over her body. In addition, she appears to have developed a somewhat dual personality, friendly and meek to those who could be allies, but gleefully mutilating the bodies of those she has killed after they declare or prove themselves to be an enemy.

Sala assists her father in seeking out magical artifacts and forgotten lore. She is obedient to him alone and would never knowingly betray him. She is skilled at throwing vials of acid, which she loves to use in combat whenever she gets a chance, to make her enemies suffer and caustically burn.



KRA

Medium humanoid (dragonborn), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wisdom +4, Charisma +3

Skills Medicine +4, Religion +2

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Pact Magic. Kra is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bless*, *cure wounds*, *sanctuary*

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Kra breathes fire out in a 5-foot by 30-foot line. Each creature in the line must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half on a successful one.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, quarterstaff, holy symbol (The Voice), explorer's pack, *potion of healing*, 20 gp

Kra is a devoted servant to the demonic entity known as The Voice, and would do anything it demands. As a young dragonborn, Kra suffered from bouts of madness; patches of blank memory after which possessions would be found destroyed, animals would cringe from her in fear, and other children would go missing...

She searched for truth in various religions, but none made sense to her, and all feared her. An obscure cult dedicated to a chorus of demonic voices was the first to tell her not that she was broken, but that she was special; that these attacks of madness were a blessing. Kra studied and worshiped to gain control of this 'blessing', and harness a portion of the The Voice's power.

For years, Kra has traveled the world, seeking greater insight into The Voice's goals, needs, and desires so, as a faithful servant, she can provide for it. These journeys led her to Garrin Ashcopse a little over six months ago. He took her into the fold and Kra has been a devoted follower of the nightmares and whispers she has gleaned from being in close proximity, unknowingly, to Garrin's *Orb of The Voice*.

The Orb, as a conduit for The Voice itself, directs Kra as a follower, and encourages her to steer Garrin towards forbidden items and knowledge that it desires to possess.



APPENDIX B: INTERMEDIATE MONSTERS

ANIMATED ARMOR

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (–5)	3 (–4)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The animated armor is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the animated armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While the animated armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The animated armor makes two melee attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

PENARAL POSSESSED TEMPLATE

A construct can become a vessel for **Penaral Quartztoil** to inhabit. It keeps its statistics, with the following amendments:

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Speed. The Penaral Possessed gains a flying speed of 30 feet.

Ability Scores. The Penaral Possessed has the following new ability scores: **INT** 20 (+5), **WIS** 14 (+2), **CHA** 12 (+1)

Skills. The Penaral Possessed gains proficiency in Arcana +8, History +8, Religion +8

Languages. The Penaral Possessed speaks Gnomish and Goblin.

Spellcasting. The Penaral Possessed is a 11th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The Penaral Possessed has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, misty step, see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm, stoneskin*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, wall of force*

6th level (1 slots): *create undead*

CRAWLING GAUNTLET

Tiny construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 21 (6d4 + 6)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	5 (–3)	10 (+0)	4 (–3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Immutable Form. The crawling gauntlet is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The crawling gauntlet has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The crawling gauntlet's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The crawling gauntlet cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Gauntlet. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14) until the grapple ends. The crawling gauntlet can only grapple one target.

Crush. The crawling gauntlet crushes the creature it is grappling. The creature must make on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

GHASTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d10 + 12)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 90 ft., blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Immutable Form. The ghastruct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The ghastruct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The ghastruct's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The ghastruct cannot be turned.

Projected Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the ghastruct must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghastruct's stench for 24 hours.

Siege Monster. The ghastruct deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ghastruct makes two steel claw attacks.

Steel Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature and not undead, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, end the effect on itself on a success.

INCOMPLETE QUARTZTOIL CONSTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d10 + 8)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+1)	12 (+1)	6 (–2)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Damage Resistance necrotic

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Immutable Form. The incomplete Quartztoil construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The incomplete Quartztoil construct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The incomplete Quartztoil construct's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The incomplete Quartztoil construct cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The incomplete Quartztoil construct makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Death Seep. Unbound, raw, necrotic energy pours out from the construct. Each creature within 10 feet of the incomplete Quartztoil construct must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 15 (6d4) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.



QUARTZTOIL CONSTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (–2)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 90 ft., blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Immutable Form. The Quartztoil construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The Quartztoil construct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Quartztoil construct's weapon attacks are magical.

Siege Monster. The Quartztoil construct deals double damage to objects and structures.

Turn Immunity. The Quartztoil construct cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Quartztoil construct makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.



WITHERED LICH

Small undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 38 (11d6)

Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (–4)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +4, Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +9, History +8, Insight +5, Perception +5

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks, cold, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Gnomish, Goblin

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the withered lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If the withered lich's heart is not crushed, a destroyed withered lich reassembles its body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again.

Spellcasting. The withered lich is an 11th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The withered lich has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, misty step, see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm, stoneskin*

5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold, wall of force*

6th level (1 slots): *create undead*

Turn Resistance. The withered lich has advantage on any saving throws against any effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Freezing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) cold damage. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (4d4) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.

THE INTERESTED PARTY

GARRIN ASHCOPSE

Small humanoid (lightfoot halfling), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (studded leather)

Hit Points 51 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wisdom +4, Charisma +8

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +8, Religion +5, Stealth +3

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Agonizing Blast. Garrin adds +5 damage to his *eldrich blast* spells on a hit.

Brave. Garrin has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Criminal Contact. Garrin has a contact in the criminal network, and can send and receive messages to them through various means, even over great distances.

Dark One's Blessing. When Garrin reduces a hostile creature to 0 hit points, he gains 13 temporary hit points.

Dark One's Own Luck (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When Garrin makes an ability check or a saving throw, he may add a d10 to the roll. He can do so after the initial roll but before determining success or failure.

Eyes of the Rune Keeper. Garrin can read all writing.

Halfling Nimbleness. Garrin can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than him.

Lucky. When Garrin rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Naturally Stealthy. Garrin can attempt to hide even when he is obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than him.

Pact Magic. Garrin is a 8th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He regains expended spell slots after a short or long rest, and knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips: *blade ward, eldrich blast, poison spray*

4th level (2 slots): *burning hands, command, fireball, fire shield, hellish rebuke, protection from evil and good, scorching ray, stinking cloud, wall of fire.*

Pact of the Blade (Flail). Garrin can use his action to create a pact weapon in a free hand. He is proficient with the weapon and it counts as magical for the purposes of overcoming resistances and immunities. The weapon disappears if it is more than 5 ft. away from Garrin for more than one minute, if he dies or if he dismisses it (no action required).

ACTIONS

Thirsting Blade. Garrin makes two Pact Flail attacks.

Pact Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft, one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage .

Dagger *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Ragged fine clothes, studded leather, *orb of The Voice*, dagger, Dragonchess, lock of hair, thieves' tools, 15gp



GRANKUS FELDSPURN

Medium humanoid (half-orc), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (leather armor)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+0)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dexterity +8, Intelligence +7

Skills Acrobatics +8, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15,

Languages Common, Orc, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Grankus can deal an extra 3d6 damage to one creature he hits with an attack if he has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or ranged weapon. He doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Binding Contract. Grankus has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Cunning Action. On his turn, as a bonus action, Grankus can take a Dash, Dodge, Disengage, Hide, Use an Object action. Alternatively, he can make a Sleight of Hand check or use his thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock.

Relentless Endurance (1/day). When Grankus is reduced to 0 hit points, but not killed outright, he can drop to 1 hit point instead.

Savage Attacks. When Grankus scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When Grankus is hit with an attack from an attacker that he can see, he can halve the attack's damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, shortsword, four handaxes, thieves' tools, burglar's pack, *potion of greater healing*, *potion of invisibility*, 135 gp



MARA SAGEPREL

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather)

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Dexterity +8, Intelligence +7

Skills Acrobatics +8, Deception +6, Perception +6, Persuasion +6, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +8

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Halfling, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Mara can deal an extra 3d6 damage to one creature she hits with an attack if she has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or ranged weapon. She doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Binding Contract. Mara has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Cunning Action. On her turn, as a bonus action, Mara can take a Dash, Dodge, Disengage, or Hide action

Escape Artist. Mara leaves no trace. Anyone attempting to track her has disadvantage.

Poison Dip. Mara can use a bonus action to add elite assassin's poison to her weapon. The next time a poisoned weapon hits, the target must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. The target is paralyzed while poisoned in this way. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Mara can substitute her elite assassin's poison for wyvern poison with this ability.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Parry. When Mara is hit with a melee attack while wielding a melee weapon with the finesse property, she can add +2 to her AC for that attack.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Studded leather armor, silver dagger, shortbow, 20 arrows, explorer's pack, poisoner's kit, 5 bottles of elite assassin poison, 2 bottles of wyvern poison, 245 gp



SALA ASHCOPSE

Small humanoid (lightfoot halfling), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Strength +6, Dexterity +7, Constitution +5

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +5, Intimidation +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +6

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brave. Sala has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Bond of Blood (1/day). When Sala is reduced to 0 hit points, she grants her father, Garrin Ashcopse, an additional warlock spell slot that must be used within one minute.

Fighting Style (Two-Weapon Fighting). Sala may add her ability modifier to damage rolls with her offhand weapon.

Halfling Nimbleness. Sala can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than her.

Improved Critical. Sala scores critical hits on rolls of 19 and 20.

Lucky. When Sala rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, she can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Naturally Stealthy. Sala can attempt to hide even when she is obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than her.

Pack Tactics. Sala has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of Sala's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Remarkable Athlete. Sala can add +2 to any Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution check that doesn't already use her proficiency bonus. Additionally, the distance Sala covers with a running long jump increases by 3 feet.

Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). On her turn, Sala can use a bonus action to regain 1d10 + 8 hit points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sala makes two weapon attacks. Additionally, as a bonus action she can make an attack with her offhand weapon.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Acid. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 5/20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) acid damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, rapier, ten darts, eight acid vials, dungeoneer's pack, *potion of greater healing*, *potion of heroism*, 120 gp



KRA

Medium humanoid (dragonborn), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 40 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wisdom +7, Charisma +5

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +5, Religion +4

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Kra is a 6th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Kra has following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, guiding bolt, inflict wounds, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, mass healing word, spirit guardians*

Maddening Strike (1/turn). Kra channels the madness and corruption of The Voice through her weapon attacks. On each of Kra's turns she can deal an additional 1d8 psychic damage to a creature she strikes with a weapon attack.

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Kra can breathe fire out in a 5-foot by 30-foot line. Each creature in the line must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3d6 fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half on a successful one.

Maddening Fear (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Kra instills madness in one creature she can see within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or drop whatever they are holding and become frightened.

While frightened by this spell, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from Kra by the safest available route on each of its turns, unless there is nowhere to move. If the creature ends its turn in a location where it doesn't have line of sight to Kra, the creature can repeat the Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, quarterstaff, holy symbol (The Voice), explorer's pack, *glyph of warding* spell scroll, 90 gp



APPENDIX C: ADVANCED MONSTERS

ANIMATED ARMOR

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 77 (14d8 + 14)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (–5)	3 (–4)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The animated armor is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the animated armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While the animated armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The animated armor makes three slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

PENARAL POSSESSED TEMPLATE

A construct can become a vessel for **Penaral Quartztoil** to inhabit. It keeps its statistics, with the following amendments:

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Speed. The Penaral Possessed gains a flying speed of 30 feet.

Ability Scores. The Penaral Possessed has the following new ability scores: **INT** 20 (+5), **WIS** 14 (+2), **CHA** 12 (+1)

Skills. The Penaral Possessed gains proficiency in Arcana +10, History +10, Religion +10

Languages. The Penaral Possessed speaks Gnomish and Goblin.

Spellcasting. The Penaral Possessed is a 17th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). The Penaral Possessed has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, misty step, see invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm, stoneskin*

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold, hold monster, wall of force*

6th level (2 slots): *create undead, true seeing*

7th level (2 slots): *finger of death, teleport*

8th level (1 slots): *maze*

9th level (1 slots): *prismatic wall*

CRAWLING GAUNTLET

Tiny construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 28 (8d4 + 8)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	5 (−3)	10 (+0)	4 (−3)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Immutable Form. The crawling gauntlet is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The crawling gauntlet has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The crawling gauntlet's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The crawling gauntlet cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Gauntlet. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 16) until the grapple ends. The crawling gauntlet can only grapple one target.

Crush. The crawling gauntlet crushes the creature it is grappling. The creature must make on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 16 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.



GHASTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d10 + 36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (−1)

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Immutable Form. The ghastruct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The ghastruct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The ghastruct's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The ghastruct cannot be turned.

Projected Stench. Any creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of the ghastruct must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghastruct's stench for 24 hours.

Siege Monster. The ghastruct deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ghastruct makes two melee steel claw attacks.

Steel Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d10 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature and not undead, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, end the effect on itself on a success.

INCOMPLETE QUARTZTOIL CONSTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+1)	18 (+4)	6 (–2)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Damage Resistance necrotic

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Immutable Form. The incomplete Quartztoil construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The incomplete Quartztoil construct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The incomplete Quartztoil construct's weapon attacks are magical.

Turn Immunity. The incomplete Quartztoil construct cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The incomplete Quartztoil construct makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 20 (4d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Death Seep. Unbound, raw, necrotic energy pours out from the construct. Each creature that is within 10 feet of the incomplete Quartztoil construct must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.

QUARTZTOIL CONSTRUCT

Large construct (undead), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 147 (14d10 + 70)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+1)	20 (+5)	6 (–2)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical weapons

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 90 ft., blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Immutable Form. The Quartztoil construct is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The Quartztoil construct has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The Quartztoil construct's weapon attacks are magical.

Siege Monster. The Quartztoil construct deals double damage to objects and structures.

Turn Immunity. The Quartztoil construct cannot be turned.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Quartztoil construct makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 22 (4d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.



WITHERED LICH

Small undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 59 (17d6)

Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (−4)	8 (−1)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +10, Wis +7

Skills Arcana +15, History +10, Insight +7, Perception +7, Religion +10

Damage Resistance necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks; cold, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Gnomish, Goblin

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the withered lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If the withered lich's heart is not crushed, a destroyed withered lich reassembles its body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again.

Spellcasting. The withered lich is a 17th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). The withered lich has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *fog cloud, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, misty step, invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm, stoneskin*

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold, hold monster, wall of force*

6th level (2 slots): *create undead, true seeing*

7th level (2 slots): *finger of death, teleport*

8th level (1 slots): *maze*

9th level (1 slots): *prismatic wall*

Turn Resistance. The withered lich has advantage on any saving throws against any effect that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Freezing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much on a successful one.



THE INTERESTED PARTY

GARRIN ASHCOPSE

Small humanoid (lightfoot halfling), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Wisdom +5, Charisma +9

Skills Arcana +9, Deception +9, Religion +9, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Agonizing Blast. Garrin adds +5 damage to his *eldrich blast* spells on a hit.

Repelling Blast. When Garrin hits a creature with *eldrich blast*, he can push the target up to 10 feet away.

Brave. Garrin has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Criminal Contact. Garrin has a contact in the criminal network, and can send and receive messages to them through various means, even over great distances.

Dark One's Blessing. When Garrin reduces a hostile creature to 0 hit points, he gains 25 temporary hit points.

Dark One's Own Luck (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When Garrin makes an ability check or a saving throw, he may add a d10 to the roll. He can do so after the initial roll but before determining success or failure.

Devil's Sight. Garrin can see in magical and non-magical darkness to a distance of 120 feet.

Eldrich Master (1/day). Garrin can spend one minute entreating his patron to regain all his expended spell slots from his Pact Magic feature.

Eldrich Sight. Garrin can cast *detect magic* at will without expending a spell slot.

Eyes of the Rune Keeper. Garrin can read all writing.

Fiendish Resilience. When Garrin finishes a long or short rest, he may choose a damage type. He gains resistance to that damage type until he chooses a new one with this feature. Damage from magical weapons or silver weapons overcomes this resistance.

Halfling Nimbleness. Garrin can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than him.

Lucky. When Garrin rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Mystic Arcanum (Mass Suggestion). Garrin may cast *mass suggestion* as a 6th-level spell once per day.

Naturally Stealthy. Garrin can attempt to hide even when he is obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than him.

Pact Magic. Garrin is a 12th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). He regains expended spell slots after a short or long rest, and knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips: *blade ward, eldritch blast, poison spray, true strike.*

5th level (3 slots): *burning hands, command, enthrall, fear, fireball, fire shield, hellish rebuke, protection from evil and good, scorching ray, stinking cloud, wall of fire.*

Pact of the Blade (Flail). Garrin can use his action to create a pact weapon in a free hand. He is proficient with the weapon and it counts as magical for the purposes of overcoming resistances and immunities. The weapon disappears if it is more than 5 ft. away from Garrin for more than one minute, if he dies or if he dismisses it (no action required).

ACTIONS

Thirsting Blade. Garrin makes two Pact Flail attacks.

Pact Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft, one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage plus 5 necrotic damage.

Dagger *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

One With Shadows. When he is in an area of dim light or darkness, Garrin becomes invisible until he moves or takes an action or reaction.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Ragged fine clothes, studded leather, *orb of The Voice*, dagger, Dragonchess, lock of hair, thieves' tools, 30gp

GRANKUS FELDSPURN

Medium humanoid (half-orc), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (leather armor)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+0)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dexterity +9, Intelligence +8

Skills Acrobatics +9, Perception +6, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16,

Languages Common, Orc, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Grankus can deal an extra 6d6 damage to one creature he hit with an attack if he has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or ranged weapon. He doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and he doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Binding Contract. Grankus has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Cunning Action. On his turn, as a bonus action, Grankus can take a Dash, Dodge, Disengage, Hide, Use an Object action. Alternatively, he can make a Sleight of Hand check or use his thieves' tools to disarm a trap or open a lock.

Relentless Endurance (1/day). When Grankus is reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright, he can drop to 1 hit point instead.

Savage Attacks. When Grankus scores a critical hit with a melee weapon attack, he can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit.

Second Story Work. Grankus can climb without spending extra movement. In addition, when he makes a running jump, the distance he covers increases by 3 feet.

Supreme Sneak. Grankus has advantage on Stealth checks if he moves no more than half his speed on the same turn.

ACTIONS

Two-Weapon Fighting. When Grankus makes a shortsword attack, as a bonus action he can make an attack with his offhand weapon, but does not add his ability modifier to the damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. When Grankus is hit with an attack from an attacker that he can see, he can halve the attack's damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, shortsword, four handaxes, two daggers, thieves' tools, burglar's pack, *potion of greater healing*, *potion of invisibility*, 185 gp



MARA SAGEPREL

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (studded leather)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dexterity +9, Intelligence +7

Skills Acrobatics +9, Deception +8, Perception +7, Persuasion +8, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Halfling, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Sneak Attack (1/turn). Mara can deal an extra 6d6 damage to one creature she hits with an attack if she has advantage on the attack roll. The attack must use a finesse or ranged weapon. She doesn't need advantage on the attack roll if another enemy of the target is within 5 feet of it, that enemy isn't incapacitated, and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Assassinate. Mara has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken its turn in combat yet. Additionally, if she hits a surprised creature, it is counted as a critical hit.

Binding Contract. Mara has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Cunning Action. On her turn, as a bonus action, Mara can take a Dash, Dodge, Disengage, or Hide action.

Escape Artist. Mara leaves no trace. Anyone attempting to track her has disadvantage.

Evasion. When Mara is subjected to an effect that allows her to make a Dexterity saving throw to only take half damage, she takes no damage on a successful saving throw and half damage on a failed one.

Poison Dip. Mara can use a bonus action to add elite assassin's poison to her weapon. The next time a poisoned weapon hits, the target must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. The target is paralyzed while poisoned in this way. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Mara can substitute her elite assassin's poison for purple worm poison with this ability.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Parry. When Mara is hit with a melee attack while wielding a melee weapon with the finesse property, she can add +2 to her AC for that attack.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Studded leather armor, silver dagger, shortbow, 20 arrows, explorer's pack, poisoner's kit, 5 bottles of elite assassin poison, 2 bottles of purple worm poison, 285 gp



SALA ASHCOPSE

Small humanoid (lightfoot halfling), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17 (studded leather)

Hit Points 99 (11d10 + 1d6 + 36)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Strength +7, Dexterity +9, Constitution +7

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +5, Intimidation +8, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Halfling

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Action Surge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). On her turn, Sala can take an additional action on top of her regular action and a possible bonus action.

Brave. Sala has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Bond of Blood (1/day). When Sala is reduced to 0 hit points, she grants her father, Garrin Ashcose, an additional warlock spell slot that must be used within one minute.

Fighting Style (Two-Weapon Fighting). Sala may add her ability modifier to damage rolls with her offhand weapon.

Halfling Nimbleness. Sala can move through the space of any creature that is a size larger than her.

Improved Critical. Sala scores critical hits on rolls of 19 and 20.

Indomitable. Once per day, Sala can reroll a failed saving throw. Once she uses this feature, she must finish a long rest before using it again.

Lucky. Sala rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Naturally Stealthy. Sala can attempt to hide even when she is obscured only by a creature that is at least one size larger than her.

Pack Tactics. Sala has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Sala's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Remarkable Athlete. Sala can add +2 to any Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution check that doesn't already use her proficiency bonus. Additionally, the distance Sala covers with a running long jump increases by 3 feet.

Second Wind (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). On her turn, Sala can use a bonus action to heal 1d10 + 11 hit points.

Sorcerer Initiate. Sala is a 1st-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She knows the following sorcerer spells:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *true strike*

1st level (1/day): *shield*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Sala makes three weapon attacks. Additionally, as a bonus action she can make an attack with her offhand weapon.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage.

Acid. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, range 5/20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) acid damage.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, two rapiers, ten darts, eight acid vials, dungeoneer's pack, *potion of greater healing*, *potion of heroism*, 120 gp



KRA

Medium humanoid (dragonborn), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (plate mail)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wisdom +9, Charisma +6

Skills Medicine +9, Persuasion +6, Religion +5

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. Kra is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). Kra has following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, guiding bolt, inflict wounds, sanctuary*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, mass healing word, revivify, spirit guardians*

4th level (3 slots): *death ward, freedom of movement, guardian of faith*

5th level (2 slots): *contagion, flame strike, mass cure wounds*

Maddening Strike (1/turn). Kra channels the madness and corruption of The Voice through her weapon attacks. On each of Kra's turns she can cause an additional 2d8 psychic damage to a creature she strikes with a weapon attack.

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Breath Weapon (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Kra can breathe fire out in a 5-foot by 30-foot line. Each creature in the line must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 4d6 fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half on a successful one.

Maddening Fear (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Kra can use her action to instill madness on one creature she can see within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 18 wisdom saving throw or drop whatever they are holding and become frightened.

While frightened by this spell, a creature must take the Dash action and move away from Kra by the safest available route on each of its turns, unless there is nowhere to move. If the creature ends its turn in a location where it doesn't have line of sight to Kra, the creature can repeat the Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

WEAPONS, ARMOR & ITEMS

Leather armor, quarterstaff, holy symbol (The Voice), explorer's pack, *glyph of warding spell scroll, symbol spell scroll*, 270 gp



APPENDIX D: NEW ITEMS

ARTIFICER'S BOOK OF MINOR INFUSIONS

Wondrous Item, Very Rare

This book describes how to cast minor infusions on mundane items to produce magical effects. Each infusion can be cast as a ritual that takes 10 minutes to complete and consumes alchemical oils and materials when it is cast. Each infusion lasts for 1 hour or until its infusion is expended. Once an item has been infused, it cannot be infused again until 24 hours have passed. The following infusions are scribed in this tome:

Energy Alteration Infusion. Any item that uses charges and has an effect that deals acid, fire, cold, lightning, or thunder damage can be infused with this effect. At the time the infusion is cast, another damage type is chosen from the list. The item can be activated with the chosen damage type in place of the normal damage type, but it uses up double the amount of charges and the infusion is expended. If the item does not have enough charges then the effect cannot be used.

Cost: 30 gp in alchemical oils to cast

Glowing Item Infusion. Any item can be infused with a colored light (chosen at the time the infusion is cast) that radiates bright light out 30 feet and dim light out an additional 30 feet. An action can be used to end the infusion.

Cost: 10 gp in alchemical phosphorous powder to cast

Lesser Armor Enhancing Infusion. A mundane set of armor can be infused to have its weight reduced by half, grant its wearer advantage on all saving throws against a damaging effect, and not impose disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Cost: 20 gp in alchemical oils to cast

Lesser Weapon Augment Infusion. A mundane weapon can be infused to be considered magical, made of a different material (silvered, cold-iron, adamantite, etc.), and gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls.

Cost: 30 gp in alchemical oils to cast

Lesser Spell Storage Infusion. You can cast one cantrip or one first level spell (using a spell slot of at least 1st level) into a mundane item when you cast this infusion. A creature holding the item can use an action to speak a command word (chosen at the time the infusion is cast) to cast the spell. If the spell uses an attack roll or saving throw, it uses the spellcasting modifier or saving throw DC of the creature whose spell slot was used. Once the spell is cast, the infusion is expended.

Cost: 50 gp in alchemical powder and oils to cast

Quicken Activation Infusion. Any item that uses charges and has an effect that can be activated with an action can be infused with this effect. The item can be activated as a bonus action but it uses up double the amount of charges and the infusion is expended. If the item does not have enough charges, the effect cannot be quickened.

Cost: 50 gp in alchemical powder and oils to cast

DRAGONTOOTH AMMUNITION

Smith Item

Market Cost: 4gp

Crafting: 2gp / 1 day

This ammunition shreds the insides of any creature struck by it and is difficult to remove.

The arrow or bolt has small, jagged barbs on the edges of its tip. It causes normal damage when it hits a target, but is exceedingly difficult to remove. If a creature embedded with a piece of dragontooth ammunition receives any healing, it gains 1d4 fewer hit points but the ammunition falls out.

A creature can use an action and attempt a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check to remove a piece of ammunition with no ill effects, but a failed check, or attempting to remove it with no check deals 1d4 slashing damage to the creature it is removed from.

Weight: —

ORB OF THE VOICE

Wondrous item, rare

This orb is a means of communication for the entity known only as The Voice. Within is a whirling, churning maelstrom which feeds paranoia, mocks, threatens and laughs. When the orb is nearby, sentient creatures suffer frequent nightmares. The orb can be used as an arcane spellcasting focus and grants a +1 to attack and damage rolls. Additionally, a creature can gaze into the orb to attempt to harness a portion of its power. Each time a creature gazes into the orb, they must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, roll a d10. The creature is given a new flaw or personality quirk that lasts for 1 week (use the table below, or use it as inspiration to create your own); after multiple failures, these can become severe.

d10 Effect

- 1 New flaw - *"I WILL NOT BE MOCKED!"*
- 2 New flaw - *"Gold. I have to have it. I have to have it!"*
- 3 Every time the creature faces a new enemy, they must make a Wisdom saving throw (DC 15). On a failed save, the character is frightened of the enemy. The creature may repeat this saving throw as a bonus action on their turn.
- 4 The creature is mute.
- 5 New flaw - *"The Voice knows best. If I'm the only one that can hear it, that just means I'm special."*
- 6 Every time the creature finishes speaking, they must say, "so says The Voice," or suffer intense pain (1d4 psychic damage).
- 7 Once per turn, before the creature declares an attack, they must roll a d20. On a 1, the creature must attack the closest ally, moving up to their speed if necessary.

- 8 Animals fear the creature intensely and are unable to remain calm or be calmed in their presence, instead fleeing or fighting as best suits their nature.
- 9 When the creature casts a spell, roll a d20. On a 1, the spell backfires, creating the opposite effect to that intended, or targeting the caster or an ally rather than an enemy (or vice-versa) at the GM's discretion.
- 10 The creature immediately takes 1d12 psychic damage, and its hit point maximum is reduced by the damage taken for the duration of the week.

On a successful save, the orb's bonus increases to +2 and the wielder has advantage on Wisdom and Intelligence saving throws. These benefits last for 24 hours.

Value: 4,600 gp

PENARAL QUARTZTOIL'S SPELLBOOK

Beginner Challenge Rating

1st level: *burning hands, comprehend languages, detect magic, false life, fog cloud, grease, identify, mage armor, magic missile, protection from evil and good, shield, thunderwave, unseen servant*

2nd level: *arcane lock, blindness/deafness, continual flame, darkness, invisibility, knock, magic weapon, misty step, see invisibility, shatter*

3rd level: *animate dead, clairvoyance, counterspell, dispel magic, fly, glyph of warding, lightning bolt, magic circle, vampiric touch*

4th level: *arcane eye, conjure minor elementals, fabricate, greater invisibility, ice storm, stone shape, stonewood*

5th level: *animate objects, contact other plane, legend lore, wall of stone*

6th level: *create undead, magic jar*

PENARAL QUARTZTOIL'S SPELLBOOK

Intermediate Challenge Rating

1st level: *burning hands, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic, false life, fog cloud, grease, identify, mage armor, magic missile, protection from evil and good, shield, thunderwave, unseen servant*

2nd level: *acid arrow, arcane lock, blindness/deafness, continual flame, darkness, invisibility, knock, magic weapon, misty step, see invisibility, shatter*

3rd level: *animate dead, bestow curse, clairvoyance, counterspell, dispel magic, fly, glyph of warding, lightning bolt, magic circle, remove curse, vampiric touch*

4th level: *arcane eye, blight, conjure minor elementals, fabricate, greater invisibility, ice storm, locate creature, stone shape, stonewood*

5th level: *animate objects, cone of cold, conjure elemental, contact other plane, hold monster, legend lore, scrying, wall of force, wall of stone*

6th level: *circle of death, create undead, magic jar, move earth, true seeing*

7th level: *finger of death, simulacrum, symbol, teleport*

PENARAL QUARTZTOIL'S SPELLBOOK

Advanced Challenge Rating

1st level: *burning hands, charm person, color spray, comprehend languages, detect magic, false life, fog cloud, grease, identify, mage armor, magic missile, protection from evil and good, shield, thunderwave, unseen servant*

2nd level: *acid arrow, arcane lock, blindness/deafness, continual flame, darkness, detect thoughts, invisibility, knock, magic weapon, misty step, see invisibility, shatter*

3rd level: *animate dead, bestow curse, clairvoyance, counterspell, dispel magic, fly, glyph of warding, haste, lightning bolt, magic circle, remove curse, vampiric touch*

4th level: *arcane eye, blight, conjure minor elementals, fabricate, greater invisibility, ice storm, locate creature, polymorph, stone shape, stonewood*

5th level: *animate objects, cone of cold, conjure elemental, contact other plane, hold monster, legend lore, scrying, telekinesis, wall of force, wall of stone*

6th level: *chain lightning, circle of death, create undead, magic jar, move earth, true seeing*

7th level: *finger of death, simulacrum, symbol, teleport*

8th level: *clone, demiplane, maze*

9th level: *power word kill, prismatic wall, wish*

APPENDIX E: DOCUMENTS

ALLIA ROOTLEBOOTLE'S LETTER

I know we didn't leave on the best of terms, but it won't be long now before I've enough to settle my debt and get the Jackdaws off our backs. I can't wait to get back home.

Production has really ramped up over the last couple of weeks. Quartztoil has had some sort of big military contract come through. Soldier constructs, very hush-hush. I'd be out the door if anyone found out I wrote this, but folk know not to go poking around my stuff since Nackle almost lost a finger trying to steal back his loses from our game...

Speaking of, I've not seen him for a few days now. People pull all-nighters at the workshop, sure, but not this long. Besides, I've never known Nackle to do a hard day's work in his life. Could you ask his sister if she's had any word from him recently? I've been hearing bad stories from upstairs. Quartztoil's been acting plain weird, even compared to his usual charming self. He's working the crew hard for this contract, but it looks like their days are numbered anyway from what I've been hearing about this new mechanical workforce. All I know is I'm out of here as soon as I'm paid.

Looking forward to finally seeing you again,

Allia

GARRIN ASHCOPSE'S CONTRACT

_____, hereafter 'The Undersigned', hereby swears to aid in Garrin Ashcopse's endeavor to secure and lay claim to The Library, formerly of Penaral Quartztoil, located in Quartztoil Tower. Specifically, the undersigned shall, to the best of their abilities, ensure safe passage for Garrin Ashcopse to Quartztoil Tower and, should a hostile presence be found therein, remove said presence. The Undersigned agrees to lay no claim to any contents of The Library, but no such limitations apply to the remainder of The Tower, save in the case of such items which it can reasonably be assumed were once a part of The Library, at Garrin Ashcopse's discretion.

In return for this service, Garrin Ashcopse will provide The Undersigned with _____ gold pieces, this amount split between precious gems and coin in a manner dictated by Garrin Ashcopse at the time of payment. Additionally, Garrin Ashcopse pledges magical protection over The Undersigned. Specifically, The Undersigned shall be bolstered in courage and against beguiling magic for the duration of the contract term.

This contract, made with blood The Undersigned gives of their own body and of their own free will, is binding for the period of 1 (one) year or until the claim to The Library, formally of Penaral Quartztoil, has been obtained by Garrin Ashcopse. For the duration of the contract term, The Undersigned agrees to carry out, without delay, any and all commands, directions, instructions, and/or orders, both direct and indirect, given by Garrin Ashcopse, and understands that failure to do so will be met with severe psychological pain. The Undersigned understands that Garrin Ashcopse is under no obligation to provide employment or reimbursement beyond the duties and payment detailed above for the duration of the contract term.

I hereby agree to the above terms,

Garrin Ashcopse

Garrin Ashcopse

The Undersigned

PENERAL QUARTZTOIL'S NOTES

Progress is slower than I had hoped. The covert nature of procuring the necessary organic components is a significant bottleneck on production. If we are to produce the required numbers, I will need more personal insight into the procedure.

The experiment was... a partial success. The vessel was unsuitable and shall need to be rebuilt which, at least, gives me an opportunity to build in some of my improvements. The locket only seems to have captured a portion of my power, and has since gone missing; while searching for it, I found myself unable to leave the tower proper. This has worrying implications and has caused the workers to question why I have stopped taking my morning rambles. Their insolent curiosity is bothersome, to say the least.

My body is beginning to fail; as I feared, my essence is contained within the tower. Work on the vessel must begin in earnest... The workers are getting too inquisitive for their own good. Doubling the shifts should serve to keep their prying eyes off my faltering form. I want to eat some cake, but a tooth came out in the last one...

A breakthrough! The prototype golems respond not only to voice commands but to direct thought, provided they remain within the tower. A few workers have proven to be a great help in operating them and they seem to be fully immersed in their work now. They proved themselves by securing the tower's defenses and entertaining me with a jolly puppet show. Best show I ever saw in my life! The psychic link will be a great help when the conversion to a modified workforce nears one hundred percent.

Some workers have been asking where the others are. Impudent tinkers. I told them they were out picking up some butter bread and delicious tickle-berry wine. Can you believe one of them said it was absurd and that there was no such thing?! All I could do was have the new batch of golems secure the nosy-nelly at the top of the tower with his questioning friends. And to think I was going to throw them a party with all the trimmings! Now I get to eat all the butter bread and drink all the tickle-berry wine myself! No other news, save that my right leg is withered to the bone now and I can no longer walk.

The fully modified workforce has been a great success. No expenses wasted on food, water, or sleep. The chamber pots are also staying cleaner. Pure efficacy and pure perfection, minus the things I need to change. The crudeness of the process was unfortunate but necessary, given the short-sightedness of the subjects and their unwillingness to take part in the more comprehensive and refined conversion of the golems. Also, they do not like it when I throw them parties! This must be an unfortunate side effect of the process.

In time, they shall come to see their error as we work out the kinks of the process.

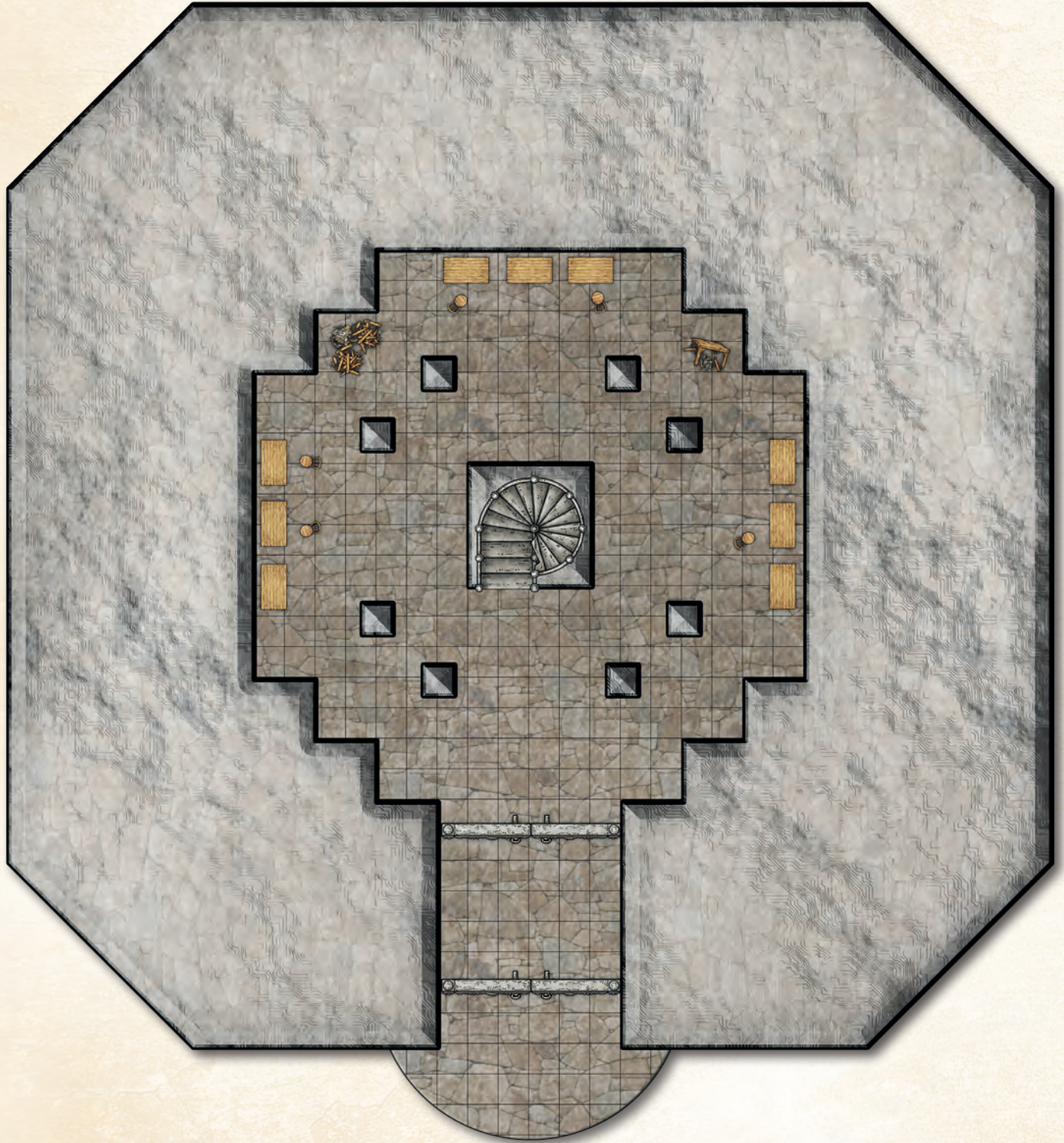
too weak... too happy... too-ta-too-ta-loo

This body will be contained today in the vessel (iteration 2). I look upon the sunrise and its rotting red disgusts me as it burns my eyes. Confinement within the vessel will help me achieve the imperfect perfection I seek and be a great boon in spreading the word. Best form of advertisement. Madam, I use these products myself, and look at me now! Happiness is gained only through potato soup and flagellation.

Writing by golem shall take some getting used to, but a much-needed step in increasing work flow. My mortal eyes see only the interior of the vessel (iteration 6), but the eyes of the tower are mine to command, the golems and workers all, and the dances are a nice touch if I do say so... and I do. Oh the workers' sleeping minds rebel, but they are mine all the same. Work shall continue. The research will continue. The shipments will continue. The continuations will continue. The contract shall be fulfilled.

APPENDIX F: FULL PAGE MAPS

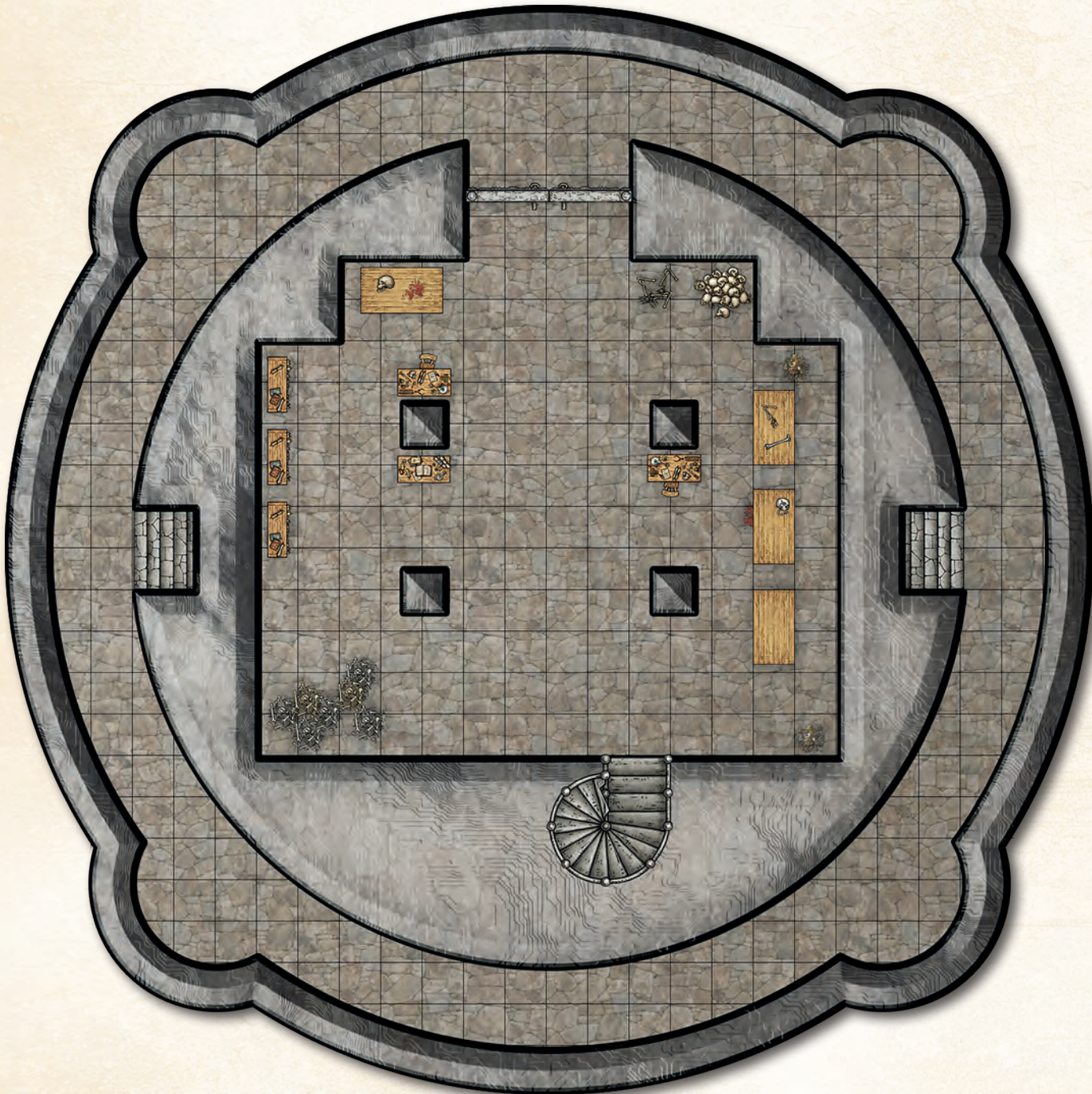
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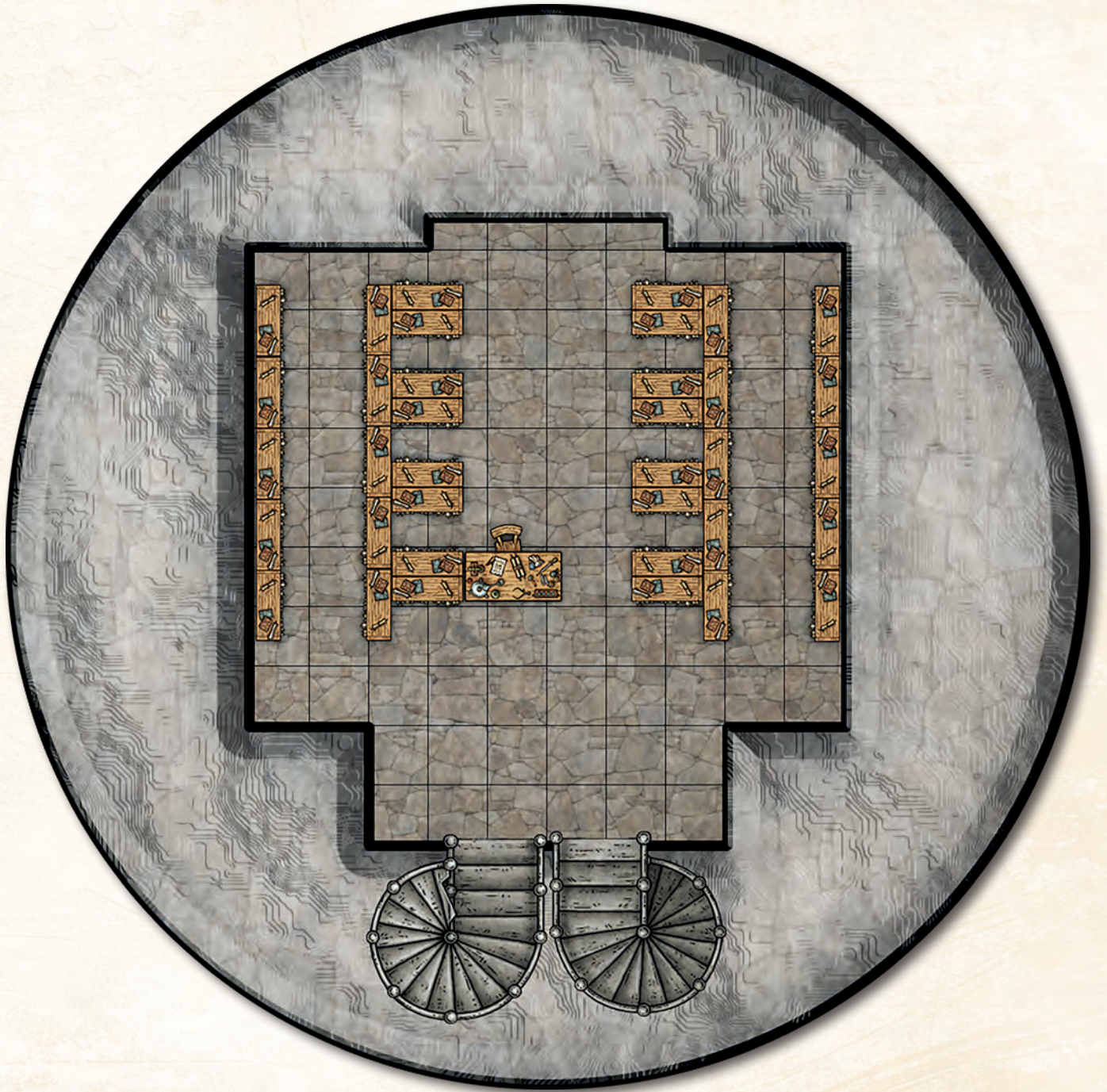
2. LIVING QUARTERS



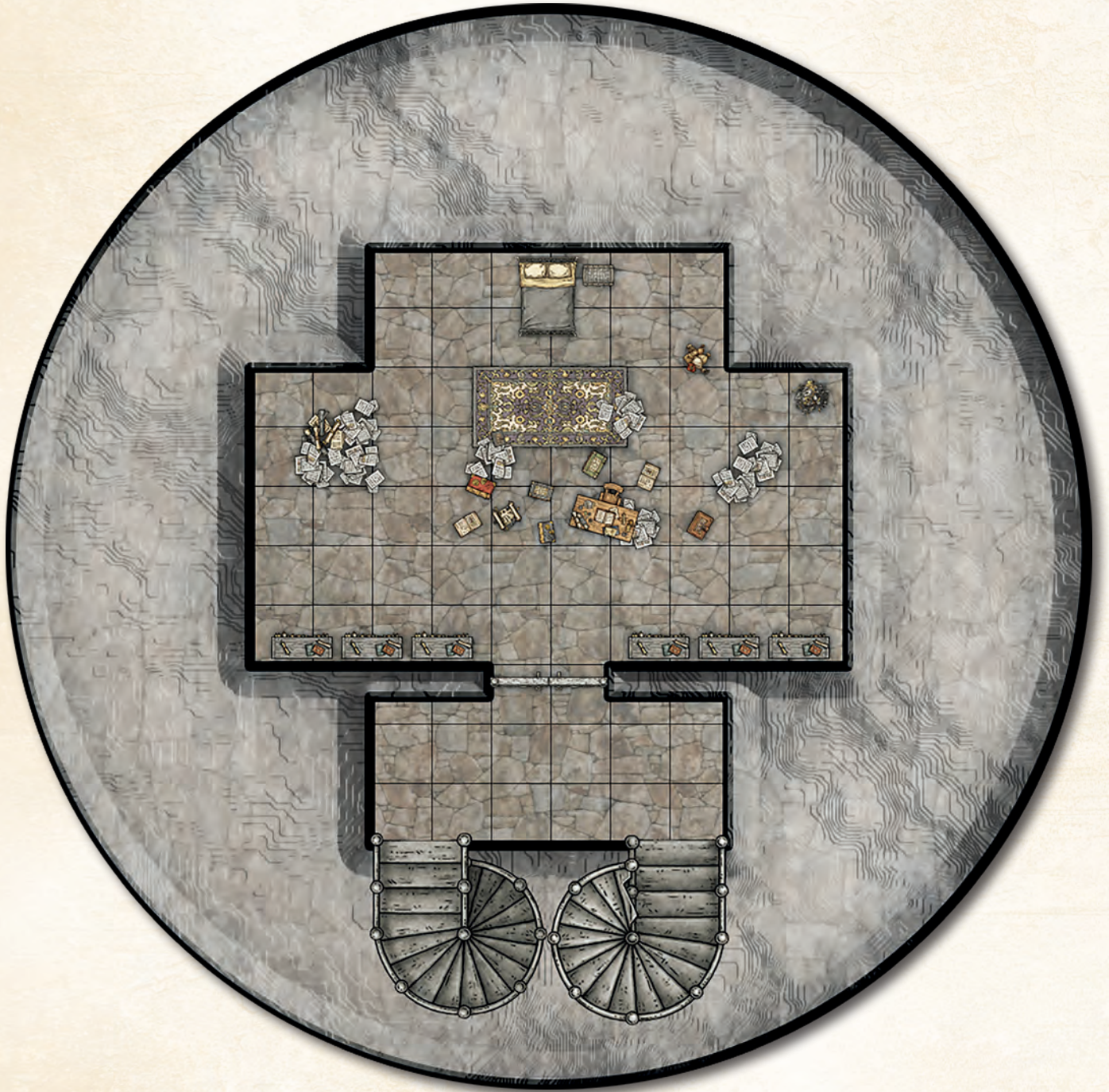
3 & 4. OBSERVATION DECK & LABORATORY



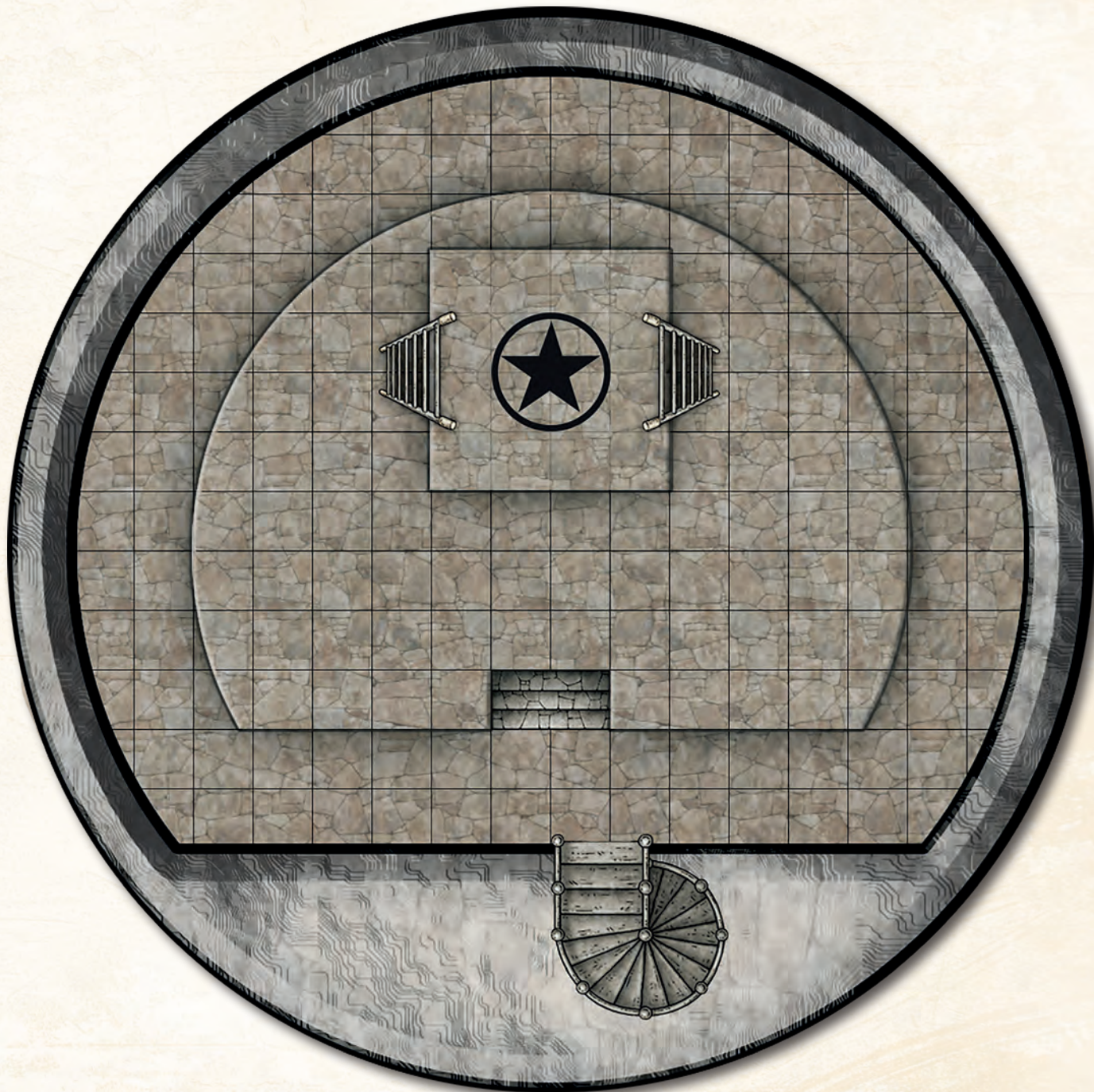
5. LIBRARY



6. QUARTZTOIL'S PRIVATE QUARTERS



7. QUARTZTOIL TOWER ROOF



APPENDIX G: ARTWORK PROCESS

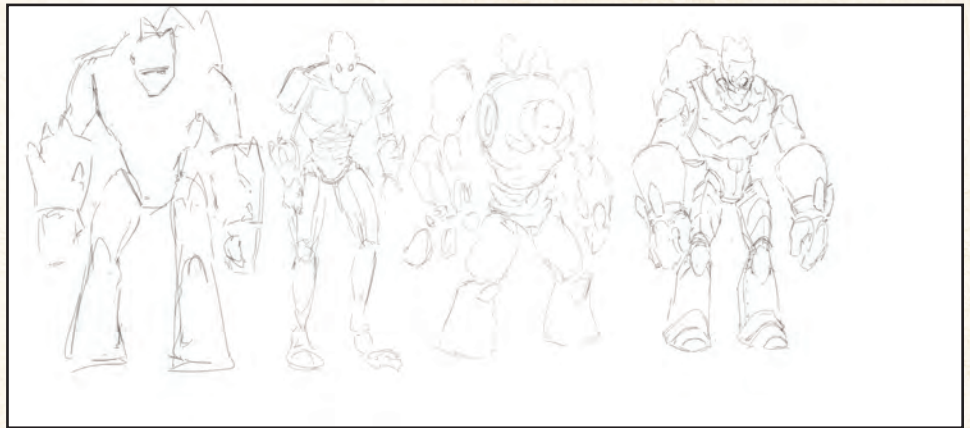
CHAOS IN THE MARKET

Ralph: The first to be worked on for the adventure, this piece really set the tone and got us very excited for the rest of the artwork. We knew that we wanted a fairly consistent look between the large golems and the animated armors which would feature in some of the other pieces (they come from the same manufacturer after all), so this piece was also a proof of concept as far as they were concerned. An original concept which incorporated chunks of living crystal into their forms separated them a little too much from the clockwork, vaguely-steampunk world of Quartztoil, so we went with a more metallic look, easier to tie together with the animated armor.

Once colored, there were few changes to be made, save for replacing a splash of wine with a cloud of flour, as it originally looked like the construct had just smashed some poor unfortunate townsfolk to pulp!

Konrad: Ralph always provided me with fantastic and short descriptions starting a project. We spent a lot of time discussing details of the environment and the characters involved and I am certain it shows!

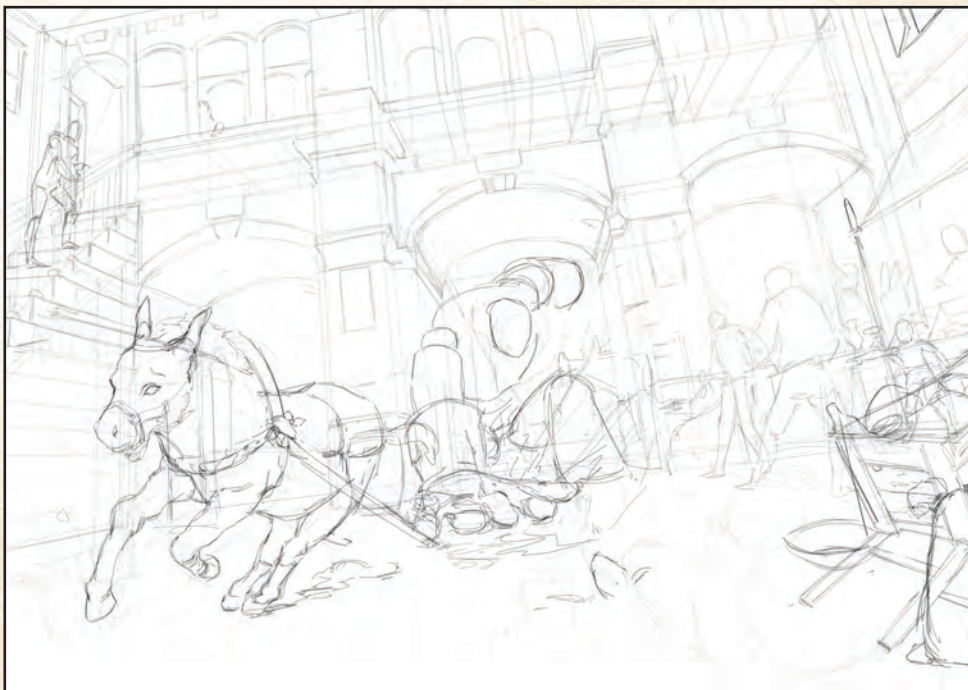
We began working on the market scene almost right away, starting with creating the first sketches. At one point, we were considering using elemental robots, bound solely by magic to armor and rock-like structures, but we kept scratching our heads, because it didn't feel right. So we shifted the armors more towards these humanoid-looking steampunk-ish shells.



I liked thinking that, though the technology involved was advanced, it was still not powerful enough to produce two robotic eyes that were small enough to fit into the same helmet. The same translated to the fingers, only allowing them four fingers per hand. Also, the armor of the construct attacking the town was more fancy than the animated armors back at the workshop; it's all about sending a message.

I was really heartbroken when Ralph decided that the wine wasn't working but, on the first look, it might have looked like some poor guy being smashed to a puddle, so I totally understood him, and I ended up liking the flour much more.

A small note: I like to imagine the scenes from the perspective of Garrin, which might be the reason for the low camera angles in most of the illustrations. So, in some sense, I managed to smuggle him in to every one of them!

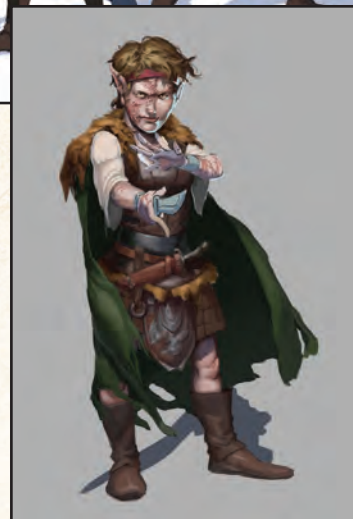




THE INTERESTED PARTY

Ralph: This was an interesting one to put together, as it included a character (Garrin) who had appeared in our book, 'Ultimate NPCs: Skulduggery'. Konrad did a great job of translating Garrin to his own style, while keeping consistent with Takashi Tan's original design (right).

First of all, a design board was created for the characters themselves; we wanted to settle on a look for each of them that we were happy with before placing them in the scene. While originally just intended as conceptual pieces, these went on to be colored as part of Konrad's artistic exercising, and so became the character portraits beside their statblocks.



Konrad: This one is was really important to me. Planning to make the characters reoccur in later illustrations, I designed them, focusing on keeping them faithful to the source material as well as adding excitement to them. Garrin, especially, had a really good and straightforward design – so I was able to keep most of his elements.

Ralph provided me with a lot of references and assisted me greatly on finding the right group dynamic on this piece.



I liked the idea of them being pods of partners in crime, not a full-fledged group of friends, and we tried to show it by positioning the characters accordingly in the scene. Those characters less involved sit a bit farther apart, while Garrin and his daughter, Sala, are very close and central. I felt that showing a glimpse of the mountains in the background helped to position the crew and pull the players ever closer to the tower!



QUARTZTOIL TOWER

Ralph: This one went through quite a few iterations before landing on the final design - from the tower gates, to the base of the cliff looking up. The long shot was chosen to give the feeling of the weary travelers catching their first glimpse, hopefully giving the tower an air of mystery and wonder.

The design of the tower shifted quite a bit from an elaborate, baroque structure surrounded by sharp buttresses, to the more stripped-down and simple final look; while the place is imposing, we wanted to give the impression that maybe this could have been a beautiful place to live once.

The addition of the figures was a fairly late one; I realized once the front cover was all but complete that we didn't have an image to wrap to the back! Luckily, Konrad is a good sport. Having a group of adventurers climbing towards the tower seemed an obvious fit, and we already had one ready-made in the form of the Interested Party.

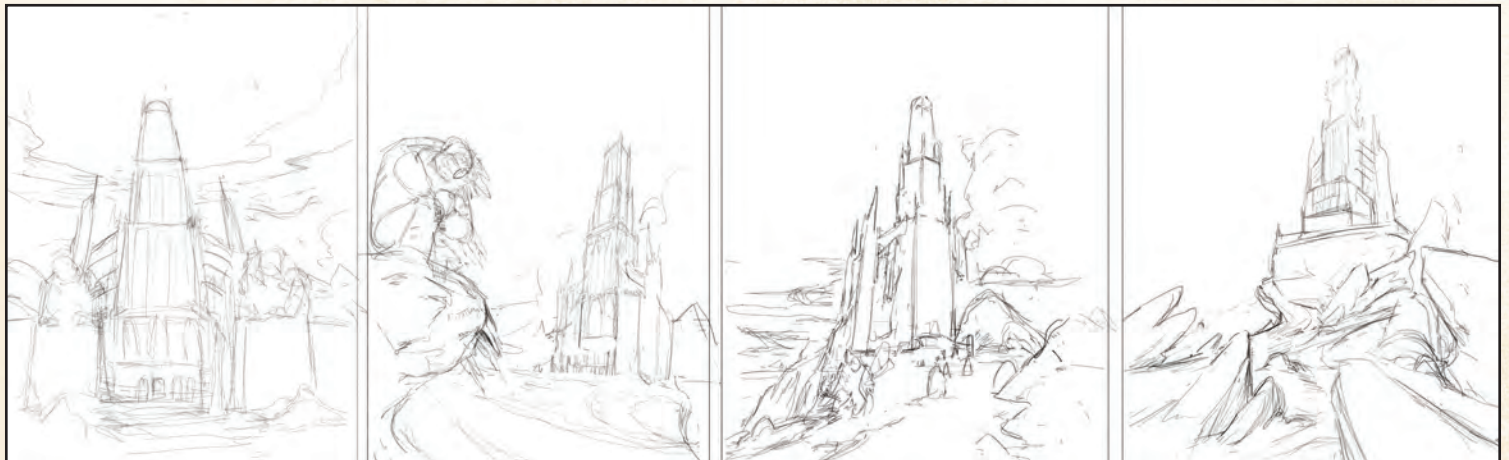
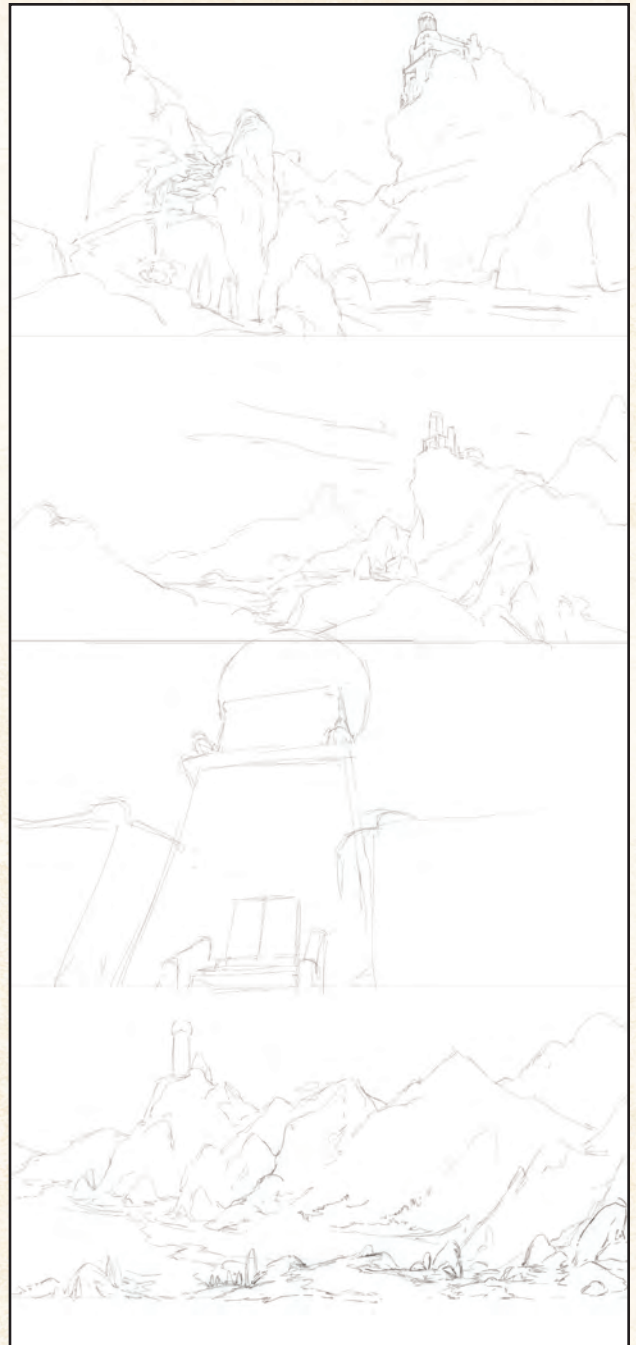
Konrad: The Tower piece went through a lot of design iterations and was the toughest to nail. We were thinking very carefully about how we wanted to introduce the players to the tower, starting with a long road winding up a steep mountain.

Simplifying the tower gave us a lot of options to contrast it to an environment that was deadly, sharp and unforgiving. It felt like the last safe place for miles and I genuinely loved it!

The wrap-around cover was a rather late addition. At first, Ralph suggested a wide and open field where our heroes in the background would fight against a storm. But then I started asking him, "Wouldn't it be cool if our heroes had to climb a steep rock on top a mountain to get their first good look at their destination?"

Thinking back, our whole process could be described by the words, 'Wouldn't it be cool if...'

We would regularly discuss ideas and add to the world together. It was a really fun way of working!





THE LIBRARY

Ralph: This one very much took on a life of its own. The original brief had a fairly generic suit of armor plonked behind a desk, but Konrad's imagination was piqued by this character, and he created designs for this ragged figure who had repaired and improved itself over the years with curtains, clasps and bookcovers. The helmet design was chosen to invoke the idea of a spider's many eyes (a chameleon-like design with two eyepieces focusing on two different tasks was deemed a little too silly).

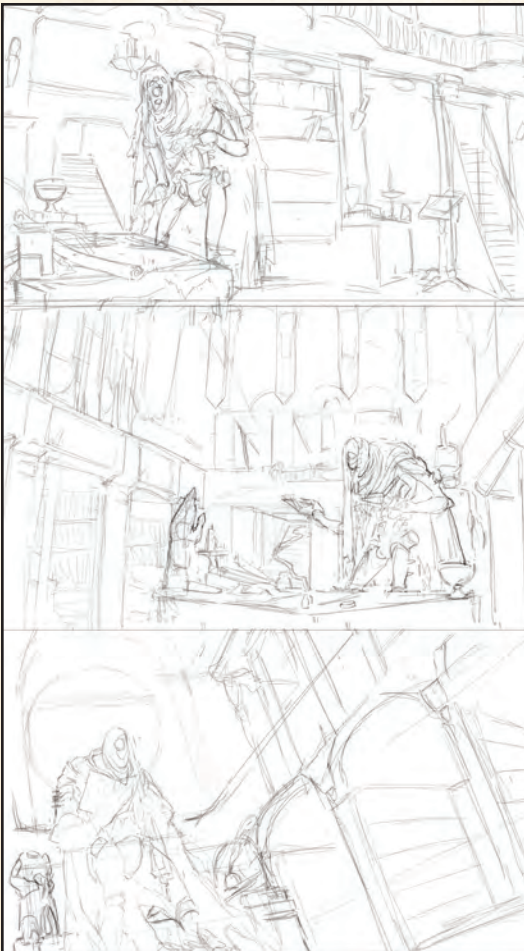
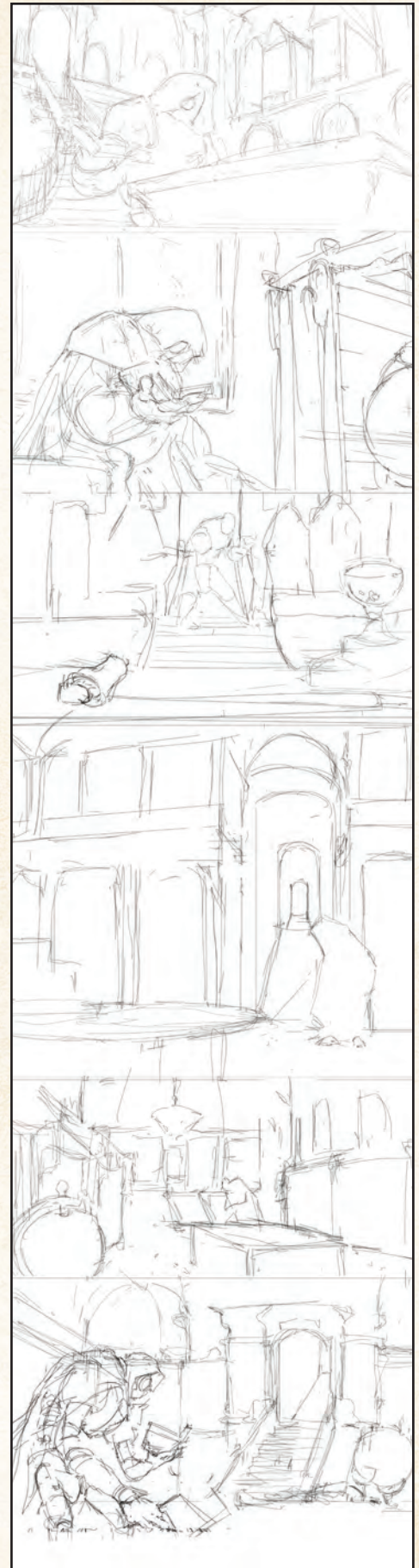
While a few of his ideas went a bit beyond the scope of the constructs as set in the adventure, he certainly pushed the idea far further than the original concept, and the piece is better for it.

Konrad: Starting out, I had the big, strong, heavy, moving armors in mind, like the one attacking the market that pushed the town into chaos, with its giant torso, thick armor and large, clumsy fingers...

I couldn't articulate it at first, but I started to realize that the librarian would need to be different to the other armors, while retaining the same underlying structure.

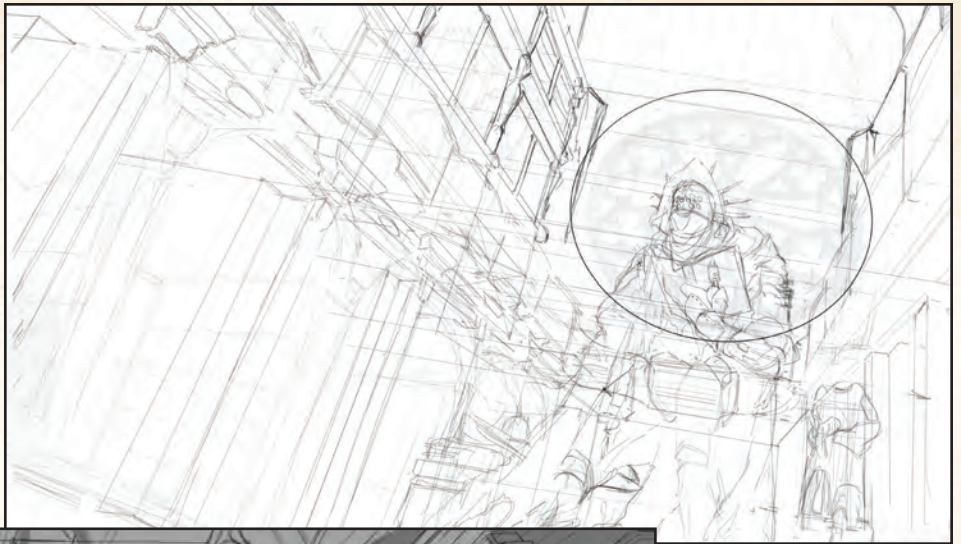
In my mind, the librarian was one of the oldest armors created by Quartztoil; a manifestation of Quartztoil's obsessive urge to learn and improve on his knowledge.

I like to believe that it started to deteriorate over time, leaving the skeleton-like scraps of metal we see. But Quartztoil couldn't be bothered, or was too much into his research, to even care that parts of metal were crumbling and falling off on their own over time.



He might have abandoned the heavy leather gloves of the other armors in order to be able to flip the pages on smaller books. He might also have added the sharp pointy ends to his fingers on his own, leaving skeletal hands with which he is able to do precise tasks like dissections.

I was also thinking about giving him multiple eyes (inspired by the sewer robots from *The Matrix*), but we scrapped the idea early on. Later, Ralph introduced the idea of the gladiator helmet and it blew my mind!



THE PINNACLE

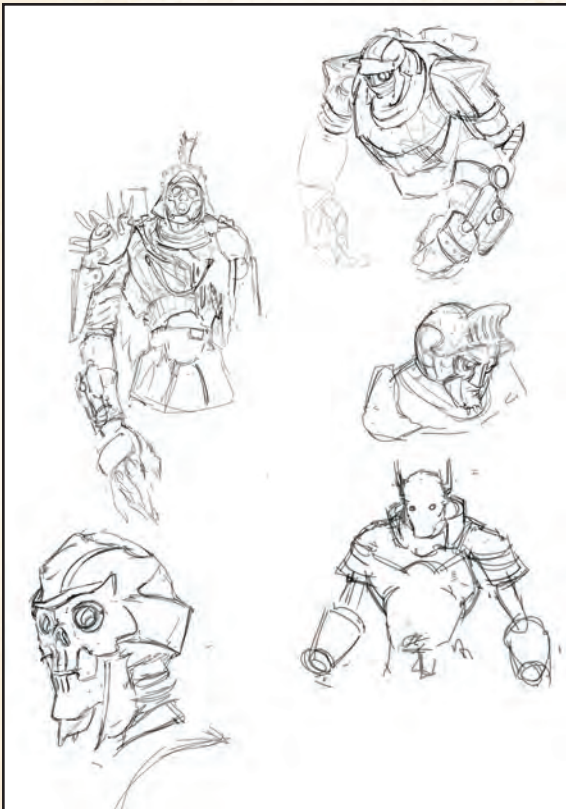
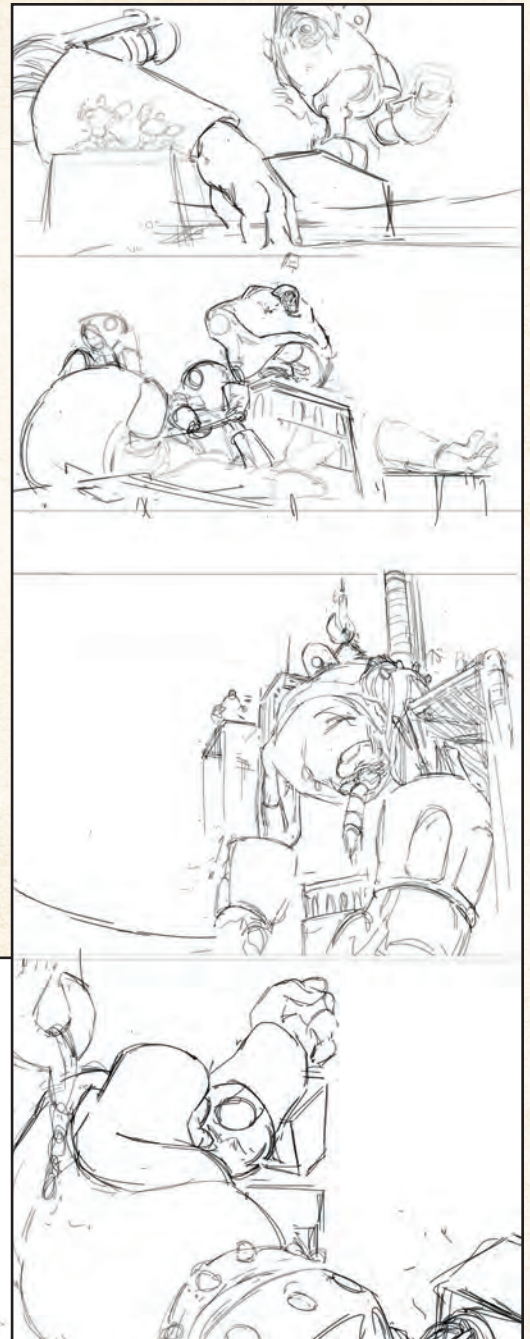
Ralph: Of all the pieces in the adventure, this one probably had the largest number, and greatest variety, of rough sketches; it took a lot of back and forth to nail down something everyone was happy with, and with it being such an important and climactic piece, nobody wanted any half measures!

I was keen to keep a low angle to emphasize the size and grandeur of Quartztoil's final project, as well as to put the viewer in the place of characters just entering the roof area. Ultimately, some of the big influences my end were video games like *Mass Effect 2*, and *Shadow of the Colossus*, but turning Quartztoil into a Byzantine-owl-Greek-god-robot-monster was a genius stroke of Konrad's own doing.

Konrad: The final piece we worked on; the final fight!

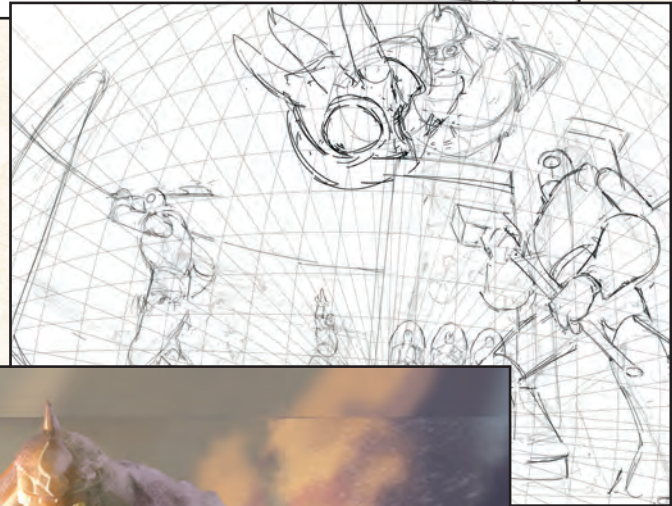
Quartztoil was my final boss as well. We started discussing the final scene quite early on, but always had a different angle or composition in mind. We agreed to push working on the piece to the end, so all my experience on this project could culminate here.

Quartztoil's basic design derived from a lot of cultural places, and is meant to represent his varied knowledge over the years. There are some European armor parts mixed with Byzantine armor into a steampunk aesthetic. The helmet derives a lot from the Byzantine era, and came close to my expectations.



The head went through a lot of changes, starting with skull-like features blending into a metal helmet, turning gradually into a Darth Vader-like helmet, but we wanted to keep him more ambiguous. That's why we used the traditional-looking armor parts to shield his mechanics, and provided him with a look more reminiscent of an owl.

I envisioned him to be a manipulator and a mastermind who is equally crazy – I liked the idea of him commanding his minions while they are standing on a chess-like floor. The first sketches laid a lot of emphasis on him commanding from afar, but Ralph and I agreed that he would need to play a much more active part in the final battle.



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Heroes of High Fantasy: Artifices of Quartztoil Tower, Copyright 2018, Chris Haskins, Nord Games LLC.

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A town is beset by incursions from strange creatures; constructs of metal, magic, and old bones. All signs point to the mysterious Quartztoil Tower, standing tall over the mountains to the north, and thought long abandoned. Rumors of the magical secrets contained within have not gone unnoticed, however, and others are drawn to the tower by dark dreams, and darker voices...

This 3–5 session variable difficulty adventure is designed to be played at any level, and can be easily tailored to fit any fantasy campaign setting.





Tactics for Mass Combat

Big battles don't need to cause big problems with our pro tips for handling hordes.

By Sam Hanshaw

Putting midlevel characters up against a horde of orcs and goblins attacking a caravan can be a tempting way to showcase their heroics, but it can also feel like a daunting task that will bury you in dice rolls. This issue's *Behind the Screens* offers advice and methods that I've used to run combat encounters with large groups of enemies during my D&D campaigns.

We'll start with three pieces of advice, and then I'd like to introduce a fourth, wider concept that I hope you'll find useful in your games.

THE TACTICS

1. Use the flat damage numbers

Every attack that appears on a creature's stat block in the *Monster Manual* or other sources lists a flat number before the amount of damage dice that are rolled. Using these default damage values for large-scale encounters cuts down on the time you'll spend rolling and reporting numbers to your players.



2. Combine multiple enemies into a single unit

There are a few ways to go about this. One is detailed under “Handling Mobs” on page 250 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*. This method sidesteps any need to roll individual attacks for multiple creatures, which can save time. It also simplifies the offensive nature of a large group of enemies, while still keeping them dangerous.

Another technique is to combine similar creatures defensively. I touched on this in [an earlier article](#), but you can combine the total HP of a group of enemies and have players roll their hits and damage against the entire group. Simply count an enemy as dead each time the max HP of a single creature is dealt in damage.

Example: The party is fighting thirty orcs. Each orc has 15 hit points, so the horde has a total of 450 HP. If a character swings and deals 62 total damage across three attacks, the horde now has 388 HP as four of them are killed and another receives a grazing wound.

This method allows martial classes to have extra impact during mob encounters (and makes critical hits especially satisfying). Another advantage to combining enemies into a single unit is that it simplifies initiative. Having a single initiative position for your orc horde makes life a lot easier than interrupting the flow to attack with three orcs,

and then two from the other side of the fight, and then back to the other side, etc. It also helps avoid the complication of keeping track of which initiative belongs to each individual enemy when dealing with large numbers.



3. Magic in mass combat without a grid

Sometimes a spell in mass combat can resolve what was supposed to be a tough battle in a matter of moments. Other times the positioning of enemies and the potential to harm their friends can leave spellcasters feeling pinched for options. All of this can be played out using a grid and miniatures, but what about when you're playing D&D theater of the mind style?

Page 249 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* includes a useful section called "Adjudicating Areas of Effect", which gives you a mathematical way to determine the average number of creatures your spellcasters should be able to target with their spells. One piece of advice I'd like to add is to give your players some hard choices. Explain that a horde of orcs is battling the party from all sides. Then offer the wizard a choice between targeting four of the orcs safely, or hitting five orcs plus the party's barbarian, or a group of eight if they're willing to put the cleric in danger as well. These sorts of situations can make for great roleplaying opportunities as the barbarian encourages them to take the most brash choice possible

(and they're a great opportunity for sorcerers to shine with Careful Spell Metamagic).



4. Treat massive groups of enemies as an environmental hazard

One option I've used for particularly large-scale encounters is to abolish initiative and the standard turn structure. I save this for when the players are involved in an encounter where they have dozens of allies in addition to enemies. This method can distill an entire round of combat between over a hundred individuals into a dozen rolls while maintaining a feeling of danger.

Using the "Improvising Damage" chart on page 249 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, I treat enemies as a dangerous threat to the players on each turn of combat. If the players do nothing, this shows how much damage they will take at the end of the turn. If the players have some allies, I might also determine that a fixed number of those allies will die each turn as a result of the threat. This creates a sort of puzzle for the players to solve, and I'll give them several options to choose from or let them come up with their own freewheeling maneuvers. Here are some examples:

- Spellcasters can use offensive spells, using the Adjudicating Areas

of Effect rules on page 249 of the *DMG* to determine the number of targets (possibly adding in some of the hard choices from #3, above). For every enemy killed, the potential damage against that player or one of their allies is reduced by one or two dice.

- Players can attack the enemy with weapons or spell attacks, rolling against the base Armor Class for the enemy type and determining their total damage. Treating the enemy as a single unit, determine how many are killed and reduce the potential damage against players in the same way you did with spells above.
- Perhaps a rogue wants to take out a key target. This might not be as easy as killing frontline enemies, but if the player succeeds with their sneak attack it will reduce the total threat to players and their allies in future turns.
- Characters with the ability to deny areas, such as druids with *spike growth*, can reduce the threat posed by enemies in future rounds by a few dice until such time as their concentration fails or the spell ends.
- Bards and clerics who can bolster their allies or heal can do so as normal, with perhaps some extra rewards for particularly creative ideas.
- Any time a player gets the opportunity to reduce damage to themselves, they can instead choose to protect an NPC from harm, leading to some heroic moments as the players fight to save their allies or innocent bystanders.

I find this system to be flexible, as the threat to the players can increase over time to show the increasing stakes, or the threat can drop when they gain tactical advantages (as with the rogue's actions in our example above). This also gives players a chance to come up with interesting combinations between them, and you can reward their creative ideas with various bonuses.

Another neat thing you can do is change up the goals to suite your scenario with an innumerable horde as your primary combat threat. Here are some examples:

- The players are trying to break the enemy morale by defeating as many enemies as possible.
- Players are fighting to reach the other side of the battlefield or

reach a specific place. Each turn brings them closer to the signal tower or the tunnels they can use to escape.

- Players need to hold on for reinforcements to arrive (maybe sunrise on day five for instance). In such a scenario, you can have gaps in the fight after a certain number of rounds as the enemy regroups and time passes. This can also afford time for the players to set up even more intricate tactical opportunities and makes keeping their allies alive a bigger priority.

I've had success allowing characters to participate as skirmishers in large-scale battles using this framework.

FURTHER READING

If you're looking for options for running a full-scale pitched battle with players making tactical decisions for entire armies I highly recommend checking out the *Unearthed Arcana* article on the subject.

You might also have noticed that many of these tips are modifications of rules found on just a couple of pages of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. I'd recommend checking out "Handling Mobs" on Page 250 and "Siege Equipment" on page 255.

That's all for this issue, if you have any tips you'd like to share for wrangling mass combat in D&D, or if you have a topic you'd like to see explored in a future issue of *Dragon+*, please send them to dragonmag@wizards.com. Thanks for reading!

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Next Issue: Dragon+ 32

We'll be chatting with a few of our favorite authors next issue!



This is where we usually tease what's to come next issue (and look for *Dragon+* #32 in June). However, we also wanted to take the opportunity to reiterate Ray's message in this issue's Welcome Letter, and our hope for everyone to stay as safe as possible.

As stated on the *Stay at Home. Play at Home.* section of the Dungeons & Dragons website, we believe the social connection of playing games, including D&D, can continue to be helpful for those of us who feel isolated or alone in our homes as we stay safe from transmission. As social distancing impacts our ability to get together in person, we'll continue to add resources to the D&D website, as well as offer further support here in the digital pages of *Dragon+*. Next issue, this will include additional adventure material made available for remote play.

We'll also hear more from author R.A. Salvatore on the final chapter in Drizzt's latest trilogy. Plus, author and comic writer Dan Abnett (the man who penned the comic-book which became that amazing *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie) will tell us what it's like to play at his table, using classic sets of floor plans and original Advanced Dungeons & Dragons sourcebooks.

There's all this, plus more exclusive previews, all our regulars such as the best of the DMs Guild, another delve into the imposing *Dragon* archive, and much, much more.

As a final word this issue, Dungeons & Dragons is oftentimes an exercise in expressing heroism in the face of overwhelming odds. Saving the local village. Clearing the countryside of danger. Ending a threat to the Realms. Even where it's a matter of killing monsters to take their stuff, there's inherent bravery involved with fighting the biggest, baddest monsters the world has to offer (in part because they have the biggest, baddest treasure, but still...).

Expressing heroism is inherent to the nature of the game, its characters—and also its players. So when it comes to COVID-19, we'll get through it, and help each other get through it, because that's who we are as a worldwide community of wonderful, talented, and heroic gamers.

Stay safe everyone.

(Contents subject to change)

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A big thank you to everyone involved with the creation of this issue. Stay at Home. Play at Home.

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